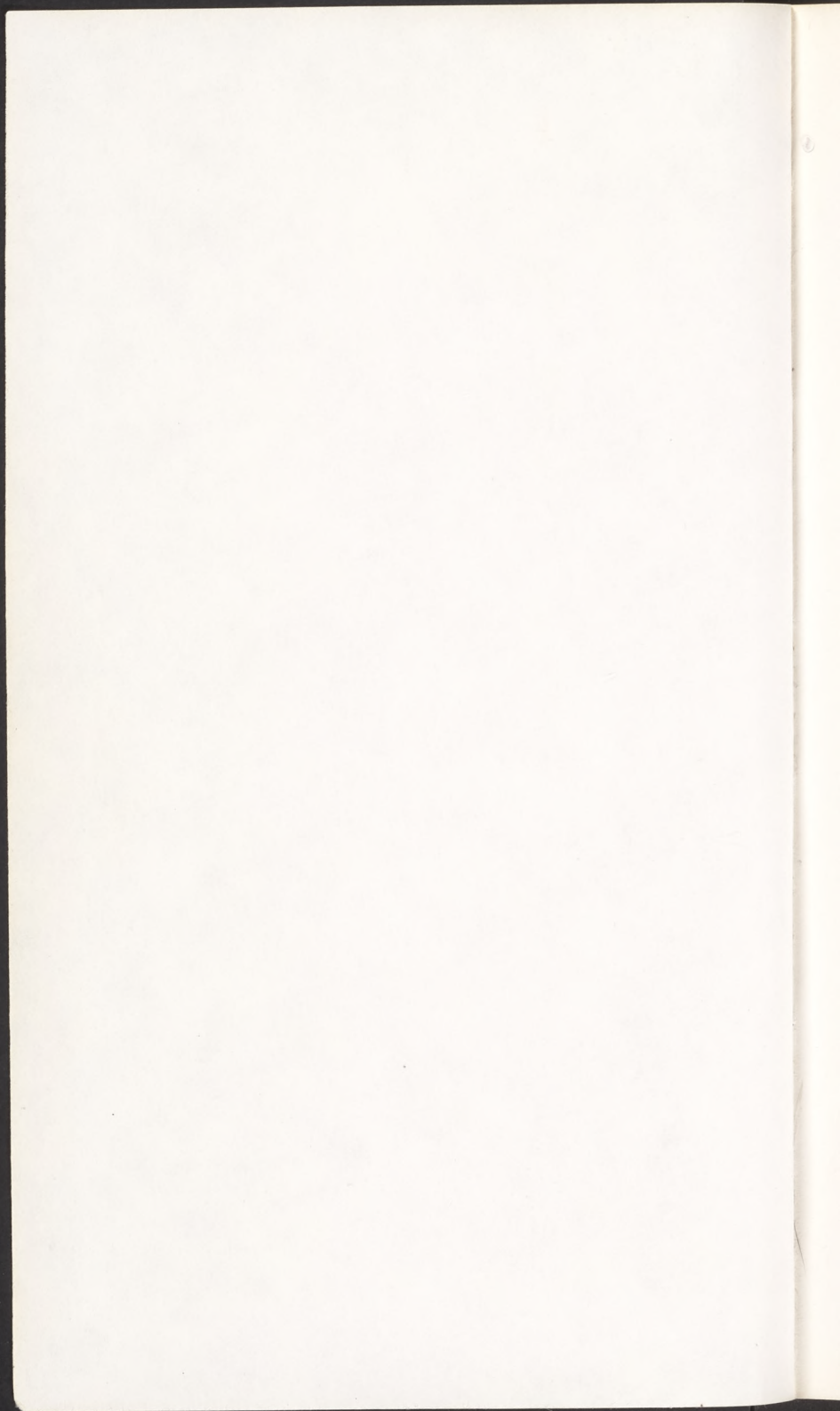
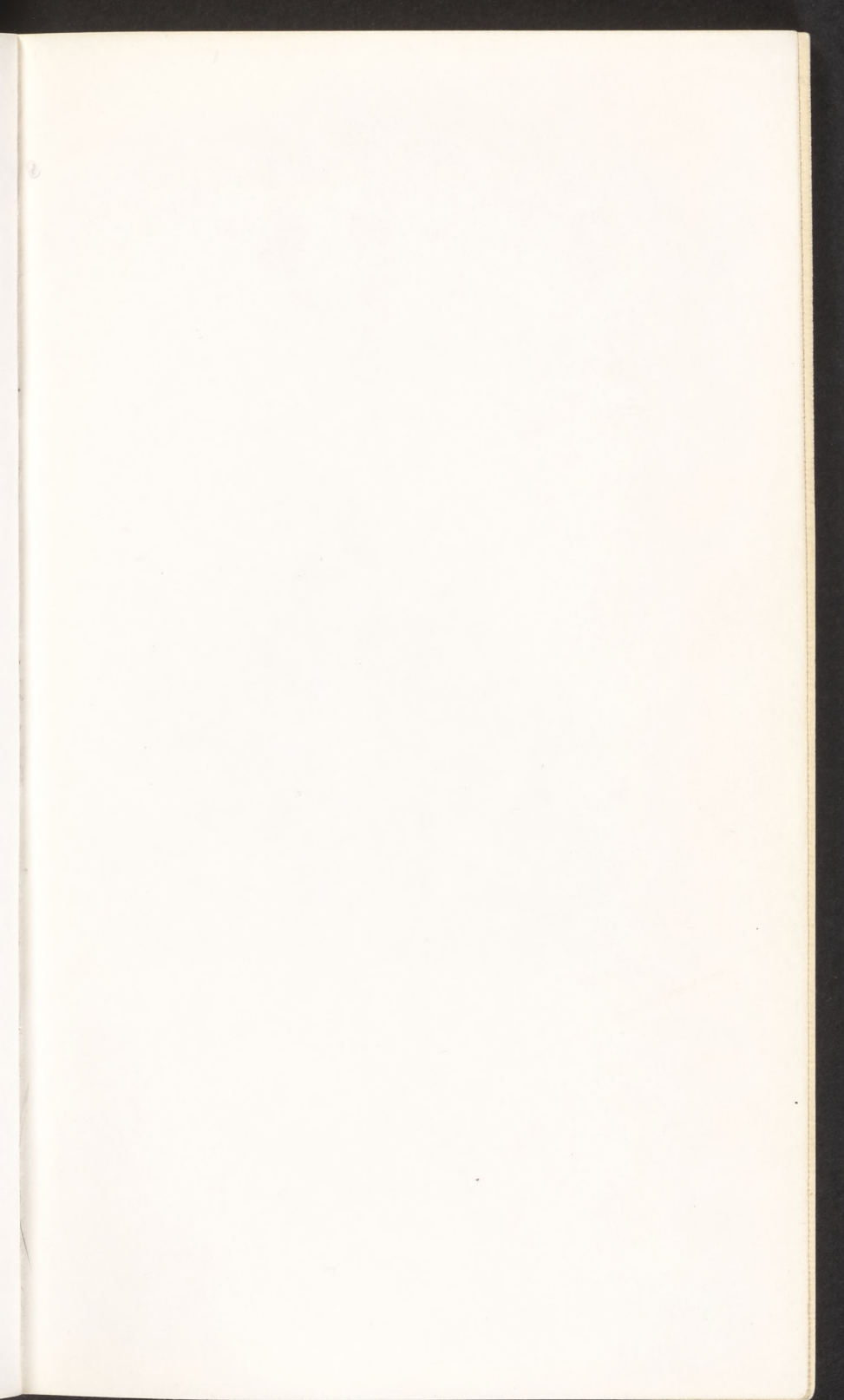




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*The*  
VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*QUARTERLY*



OLIVE MANN ISBEL

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## THE VENTURA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The Ventura County Historical Society's headquarters is the Pioneer Museum, 77 North California Street, Ventura, California. There are three classes of membership - active, \$5 per year, sustaining, \$25 per year and life, \$100.

The QUARTERLY is published in February, May, August and November from the Society's headquarters at the Pioneer Museum. The present editorial staff is composed of Chas. F. Outland, Chairman, and Grant Heil, with the assistance and advice of the Society's officers.

The Society assumes no responsibility for the statements or opinions of authors of various articles. All communications should be addressed to the Society at the Pioneer Museum. Memberships include subscription to the QUARTERLY. Additional copies are available at \$1.00 each.



# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

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No. 1

## *From Our President*

During the past few years the idea of county historical societies has grown throughout California. Perhaps it is because as a state we have passed our one hundredth birthday. A few of us began to talk about such an organization for Ventura County. It was taken up with the Native Sons, the Pioneer Society and the Oxnard and Santa Paula Native Daughters Parlors and the four organizations were asked to be the sponsors. Each one appointed a committee to work with similar committees from the others, and the ground work was laid. The organizational committee thus formed was composed of the following: Native Daughters — Mrs. Harold Dudley, Mrs. John Thille, Mrs. C. R. Nieland, and Mrs. Rafaelita Philbrick; Native Sons — J. H. Morrison, L. T. Shiells, C. A. Phleger, A. D. Alvord, Robert Pfeiler, and Chas. Outland; Pioneer Society — Jos. H. Russel, A. Camarillo, R. G. Percy and James H. Roth.

The idea met with popular support at once; and with very little publicity and little solicitation, we had over one hundred charter members by the time an organizational meeting was called on Admission Day, 1955. Seventy five attended the dinner meeting at Pierpont Inn, Ventura, when permanent officers were elected by-laws adopted and committees appointed.

The purposes and aims of the Society are to gather and preserve interesting and factual history of the County. There are letters and diaries of interest that have never been published, and there are people still living with first hand knowledge of early days. This information will be made permanently available through the pages of our QUARTERLY, of which this is our own "First Edition."

R. G. PERCY



# Dr. and Olive Mann Isbel, Pioneers of 1846

Edited by the Staff

The year of 1846 was an eventful one in the history of California. The war with Mexico, so long expected, had at last broken out and Fremont, Stockton and Kearny were busy fighting the Californians wherever they could find them. Later they would fight among themselves even more bitterly. 1846 saw the rapid rise and fall of the controversial Bear Flag Revolt, the influx of a considerable number of emigrants via the overland route and, of course, the terrible tragedy of the Donner Party. Among the emigrants of that year were two who later were to spend many years of their lives in Ventura County: Dr. Isbel and his beautiful wife, Olive Mann Isbel. Mrs. Isbel is usually given credit for having been the first American school teacher in California. Her husband was a prominent figure in the early gold rush days, both as prospector and as an Indian trader.

Legends and stories of the Isbels are numerous; fertile source material is meager. In the sources printed here the discerning reader will note discrepancies, not only in the material itself, but also between it and the many commonly accepted legends that have grown up around this remarkable couple. The notes at the end of the article will endeavor to explain these differences.

Foremost among the source records on the Isbels is the autobiographical sketch left by Mrs. Isbel. This tantalizingly short account was discovered many years after her death, hidden behind a large personal picture.

"My first teaching in California was commenced in the month of December, 1846 in a room about 15 feet square, with neither light nor heat, other than that which came through a hole in the tile roof. The room was in the Santa Clara Mission, near San Jose. There most of the families that crossed the plains that year were housed by Colonel John C. Fremont. I taught the children of my fellow emigrants under great difficulties. We had only such books as we chanced to bring with us across the plains, and as superfluous baggage was not to be thought of, our stock of books was limited. I had about 20 scholars.

"When our soldiers were disbanded, some five or six families moved to Monterey, California, where the first American consul, Thomas O. Larkin, engaged me to teach a three months' term. They specially fitted up a room for me over the jail. I had 56 names enrolled, at \$6 each for the term. Part of the scholars were Spanish and the other part the children of emigrants.

"Those were the first 'American' schools in California. I came to California first in 1846, and started on my return to Ohio May 1st, 1850. In 1857 I went to Texas to live, but left there in 1863. I went to Santa Barbara on Dec. 28th, 1864. I lived on the Ojai two years and came to Santa Paula in March, 1872, where I have resided ever since. I am a Buckeye, born in Ashtabula, Ashtabula County, Ohio. I have been a widow since January 1886. My only support is a Mexican pension of \$8 per month. (1)

Olive Mann Isbell. Santa Paula, March 17, 1893"



It is remarkable that this woman, who could have told so much, actually told so little. It is noticeable also, that she did not once mention her husband in the above sketch. Fortunately, we have other sources with which to fill in the blanks and to gain a better insight into their lives and their times. From the following two letters written by Thomas R. Bard to Pennsylvania relatives we are able to form a much better picture of Dr. Isbel:

February 15, 1866.

"Another of our party is old Dr. Isbel (2) who keeps the hotel. A very eccentric, jolly, queer old cuss, who eternally grumbles about something or other. He came out here long before the gold excitement of '48, was with Fremont as surgeon of his command when he took this Southern California. (3) During the early part of the Rebellion, he lived in Texas; owned one of the finest properties of the State, near San Antonio, but was run out of the country by the 'damned secesh'. Is always talking about going somewhere to get away from 'this miserable nest of S. B. V.' (San Buena Ventura). He says the Apaches shoot golden bullets and he knows where to get them, and wants a party to go with him to hunt the Golden Hill, etc." . . .

Feb. 28, 1867

"I've just left the bedroom of a poor suffering man who has had both legs broken by being thrown from his buggy, and who bears his suffering and prospect with heroic fortitude. Two Sabbaths ago, while going from here to the ranch I found him lying in the road insensible, and both legs broken, and the bone of one protruding through the flesh. With the aid of a native woman, I succeeded in getting him into the bottom of my little wagon, and brought him here. He is one of my best friends and is the old gentleman whom I have probably mentioned in one of my letters. Came here before the gold excitement in '47, (sic) made and spent several fortunes, went to Texas where he owned one of the finest estates in the State, but being loyal to his country, suffered everything but death at the hands of the rebels and was forced to leave his property. He and his wife, one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, came here and opened a hotel, but lost money at the business. At a moment when he was much dejected, I offered him a home and pasturage for his cattle on the Ojai, where he has been for six months, happy and prospering and affording me many a rare treat of wild duck, haunches of venison, and dozens of quail, to say nothing of his narration of incidents in his life's experience. He has traded with the Klamath Indians of the north and fought and killed many a marauding Apache on the borders of Texas. I have shown him all the kindness possible and I do assure you that his 'God bless you' when I take my leave of him, is ample reward. A few days ago I drew up and had him execute his will wherein he bequeaths 2/3 of his Texas property to a nephew, on condition that he go there at once to recover it from 'the infernal, thieving secesh.' I have fought the surgeon from Santa Barbara who



is attending him, and induced him to delay cutting off one leg, which he seemed determined to do, and I think he will now be able to save it.'

One of the Isbel's close friends during the days they lived in Ventura and Ojai was Dr. S. F. Peckham, a University of California chemist, and later associated with the Union Oil Co. In a lengthy letter to Mr. Bard, dated April 26, 1912, Peckham wrote concerning the Isbels: (Portions are deleted)

Hon. Thomas R. Bard  
Hueneme, California

My Dear Sir:

I told you some time ago, when it was convenient, I would give you some memoranda, concerning the Isbells. The details of these memoranda as related are partly from my own experience and have been communicated to me by the Doctor and Mrs. Isbell at different times by letter and by personal narrative.

I first met them in July 1865, in San Buenaventura. Mrs. Peckham and I had journeyed from New York to that out-of-the-way-place. We found the Doctor and his wife as our host and hostess at, what was called then, the American Hotel. They greeted us very cordially . .

After I became established on the Ojai Ranch, I had frequent occasions to patronize the Doctor's hotel. In the course of one of these visits he told me he had a rifle that he loved more than anything else in the word except his wife. After a little persuasion, he brought it out. He held it up and patted it caressingly, and after a little said, addressing me, "Doctor, you have no idea how many Indians I have killed with that rifle." (4) . . .

One day I went to the Mission, determined to take a trip to Wheeler's Canyon with the purpose of getting two five gallon cans filled with oil from one of Wheeler's tanks. The Doctor listened to my request for a buggy and two horses. He said that Mrs. Isbel would like to take a ride and asked me if I had any objection to her going along. I told him no, and we soon started off. Wheeler's camp was eighteen miles from the Mission.-- While on the trip, she amused me with stories of her experiences in her California days. She said that one afternoon she was left alone by the Doctor as he had gone to buy some cattle and was, at that time, about 80 miles from home. While she was eating supper, an old Indian came into the house and told her that some men of his tribe on the American River had several pounds of gold that they would sell to the Doctor. Next morning Mrs. Isbel had her favorite horse saddled and she rode 80 miles to the Doctor's camp before sundown. On her way she swam her horse across the American River. Said I, "How in the world could you, a woman on side saddle, swim a horse across a river and keep dry?" "Well," she said, "I did it. I took my foot out of the stirrup, curled myself on the saddle, tucked in my skirts and the horse



swam over, leaving me perfectly dry." She rode the horse back again the third day. The Doctor took some old horses and made a trade with the Indians for the gold, getting 13 lbs. of clean gold dust. (5)

It was, however, during my second visit to California that Mrs. Isbel gave me many of the details of her adventurous life.— Soon after their marriage they went to Chicago, when it consisted of but little more than a Trading Station, attached to Fort Dearborn, and soon established themselves in a village a short distance outside the City where the Doctor soon acquired an extensive practice, but they both had the wandering temperament. One day the Doctor came into the house and said, "Olive, how would you like to go to California?" It was not long before the Doctor had arranged to meet the other members of the party at Des Moines, Iowa. The party soon started overland on their long journey. A short distance beyond Council Bluffs they encountered the ill-fated Donner Party, who were indulging in a frightful quarrel (6) and wasting time they should have been using to get across the mountains before winter. The Isbel party left them behind and never saw them again till the following season in California. (7) . . .

After the rainy season was over, she organized a school to keep the children busy and out of mischief. (8) She had children of white parents, no two of which came from the same place, or were of the same nationality; Spanish children of the native Spaniards of California and a few Indians. It was amusing and pathetic to hear her tell how with twenty children and three or four English books, she taught those children who spoke Spanish the English A. B. C. . . .

Very truly yours

S. F. Peckham.

One side of Dr. Isbel that has been omitted by county historians is revealed in the newspaper account at the time of his death. From the Ventura Free Press of January 8, 1886:

"Unfortunately for Dr. Isbel. when trouble came he resorted to drink to drown his sorrows. Twice in his life he was wealthy, but circumstances over which he had no control reduced him to poverty, and for some time he has been compelled to depend upon the charity of others for support. Such is life, sometimes, in the fitful and capricious world. Dr. Isbel died at Santa Paula, Tuesday."

### NOTES

1. Mrs. Isbel apparently refers to a pension for the services rendered by Dr. Isbel at the time of the War with Mexico.
2. The spelling of the name "Isbel" is found to vary considerably. Bancroft, in his Pioneer Register, cites three different ways of spelling the name. He also incorrectly gives John as the Doctor's first name. Dr. Isbel's correct full name was Isaac Chauncey Isbel.
3. Dr. Isbel's part in the war is somewhat obscure. Bancroft does



not list him as having been an officer in Fremont's Battalion. Dr. Peckham, in another letter not printed here, says that the Doctor became ill soon after the Battalion left for southern California, and returned to the north. By April of 1847 the Doctor was operating a hotel in Monterey, the first such hostelry in that famous city. (see THE EARLY INNS OF CALIFORNIA, by Cross, pages 28 & 29.)

4. In newspaper accounts some thirty years ago, relatives of Mrs. Isbel stated that the Doctor was twice shot from his horse by Indians.
5. The story, often told, that Dr. Isbel did not hunt gold, but rather made his fortune trading with the Indians, is somewhat refuted in Carson's famous book, EARLY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MINES, ETC. This work records that Dr. Isbel, along with John M. Murphy, was in the forefront of the early gold prospectors.
6. This statement is incorrect. The Donner Party left from Independence, Mo., and it would have been impossible for the Isbels to have passed them "a short distance beyond Council Bluffs." The trail from Independence met the one from Council Bluffs some 300 miles west of Independence. Peckham may have meant Scotts Bluff. These quarrels were commonplace among most parties crossing the plains. McGlashan, in his HISTORY OF THE DONNER PARTY, refers to such episodes as, "want of harmony."
7. If true, this statement blows up the beautiful legend that the Isbels traveled a considerable distance with the Donners. There is other evidence to substantiate the view given here by Peckham. It is surprising how many emigrants tried to "join" the Donner Party after the suffering was over. In the case of the Isbels it must be remembered that the Doctor was a close associate of John M. Murphy, and that Murphy's wife was Virginia Reed, one of the survivors of that tragedy. It is probable that with the telling of tales, the passing of the years, and the retelling of those tales, that legend in time had the Isbels traveling with the Donners.
8. Dr. Peckham has his seasons mixed. The teaching referred to here must have been at Santa Clara in the winter, not at Monterey "after the rainy season."

\* \* \* \*

The Indian who was knocked down and trampled on by an irate bull at the bull-fight last Sunday, is all right again. He should learn to either let bulls or whiskey or both alone. Ventura SIGNAL, October 4, 1879.



# Bibliography

By Chas. F. Outland

A section devoted to the interests of teachers, students, librarians, book collectors, and all others afflicted with any of the various forms of acute or chronic bibliomania.

A HISTORY OF SANTA BARBARA AND VENTURA COUNTIES, CALIFORNIA. Thompson & West Publishers, Oakland. 1883.

This is the earliest of the so called write-up or "mug" histories pertaining to Ventura County. In the past, works of this type have been looked upon with very little favor, primarily because of the numerous historical errors in them. With the passing of time, bibliographers have become more tolerant and have begun to recognize their value, particularly in regard to the great mass of biographical material they contain which is not readily available elsewhere. Numerous illustrations add to the attractiveness of the book.

The Thompson & West History cannot be classified as rare in the strictest sense of the word, but it is becoming increasingly hard to find on the shelves of the antiquarian book dealer. A copy in excellent condition is a very definite rarity. There are still a number of these books in the families of the original purchasers. The Ventura County Library and the Pioneer Museum both have copies.

NOTES ON THE GEOLOGY OF VENTURA COUNTY, CAL. by Stephen Bowers, Ph.D. Ventura, California, 1888. 14 pp.

This interesting little pamphlet was written by a rather controversial early day character. Dr. Bowers' field of interest ran all the way from geology to religious philosophy, including astronomy, ethnology, and archaeology. His intense curiosity in the latter field has not endeared him to the present day scientist. Bowers probably dug into more Indian rancheria sites, exhumed more skeletons and collected more tons of Indian artifacts than any other man in the history of the state. In so doing, he inadvertently ruined many sites that would yield more valuable information to qualified scientists today.

The work listed here contains some very interesting information, particularly in regard to the Piru mining region. Bowers lists the names of the active mines in the area at that time, their owners, types of milling equipment in use, the value of the various ores per ton, etc. The work also gives an extensive analysis of the petroleum industry as it was in 1888 in the County. A geologist presently employed by the State of California, who is thoroughly familiar with Ventura County, rates this pamphlet as reasonably accurate and good for its time.

Portions of this work were reprinted in the Storke HISTORY OF SANTA BARBARA, SAN LUIS OBISPO AND VENTURA COUNTIES in 1891, but of the original only one or two copies are known.

Dean Hobbs Blanchard Library has a photostatic copy.



## Stage Coach Days

(Editor's Note: The following descriptive article telling of stage coach travel through what is now Ventura County, originally appeared in the OVERLAND MONTHLY under the title "Tropical California". The author, Josephine Clifford, was one of the popular writers of that era. Mrs. Clifford made the trip described here in 1870.)

The regrets I expressed on leaving Santa Barbara came from my heart; it is a lovely spot, and even when I went from it I could not but lean out of the window to catch departing glimpses of it as it faded more and more from sight. The stage road winds along by the sea; the sun was shining, golden as it seems ever to shine on these serene, blue ripples of water, and there was something so quieting in the soft plashing of the waves against the shore that I laid my head back and, with open eyes, dreamed — dreamed till I fell asleep, and was waked up again by the sound of water rushing immediately under the coach. I looked out in bewilderment; it was true, the horses were drawing the coach through the foaming, flashing waves. The other passengers expressed no concern; so I, too, remained quiet, and soon found that this was the pleasantest way of traveling along the coast.

Twenty-five miles below Santa Barbara lies San Buenaventura, another old mission, around which quite a flourishing place has sprung up. The flimsy, garish frame houses have crowded themselves in where the olive, the palm, and the fig-tree once grew in unbroken lines; but now only patches of ground, covered with giant pear trees and huge old olives, are visible back of the fast growing town. Passing through in the broad, positive light of noonday, I could look on these things philosophically and with equanimity; but on my way back from Los Angeles some time later, in the chill hours of the wandering night, the sight of the place made me feel sad, almost bitter. Night had not yet lifted her mantle from the earth as the stage rolled heavily toward San Buenaventura, and the roar of the ocean fell on my ear with hollow sound. Soon I distinguished the bell towers of the Mission Church, and the tinkling of the bells, just touched, had a feeble, complaining tone; now we turn into the one long street of San Buenaventura, and in the darkening halls, the clerk of the hotel shows me into a cheerless room, upstairs. I walk to the window — to the rising light — and there, in the yard below are those peerless, graceful palm trees I saw waving and bending in the dim distance. How pitiful to see these neglected daughters of the torrid zone lifting their royal shafts among the stove pipes and empty dry good boxes of a country store back yard. I stretched out my hands lovingly, and they nodded their proud heads, and flung their arms to the morning breeze, pointing to where those clusters of dark olives stood. But it grows lighter, the stage is at the door, and bears us



rapidly away. In the far east breaks the cold grey morning — "those Americans" are coming. From over the dashing spray, on the sea-shore there rises an eagle, strong, and with keen eyes and sharp talons, proudly he wings his way over palm tree and Mission Church; to the mountains he takes flight, there, on the highest peak, to fold his wings — monarch of all he surveys.

For miles and miles, the country beyond San Buenaventura shows traces of having formerly been cultivated. I can not tell whether this cultivation dates back to the days of the Mission Fathers, or whether later settlers have abandoned it; at all events it makes this country an agreeable contrast to the barren wastes we find nearer Los Angeles. But all through this more southern portion of California, particularly, there was one thing that struck me as very peculiar; the "heaven-wide" difference often seen between the two sides of the road. Traveling along near the Santa Clara River, for instance, in the Santa Clara Valley, I could, by looking out of one stage-window, feast my eyes on the most magnificent green plains, tall corn, and fields of vegetables, inclosed by willow-hedges; while the other side of the road exhibited a never-ending succession of the most dreary, scorched-looking hills or an endless, black, barren plain. Very few houses are to be seen here — more's the pity — and those that we do see, are adobe, but the adobe of the better class — whitened on the outside, with a ramada (?) tending over the little courtyard, and flowers blooming near the door.

The waters of the Santa Clara River are used for irrigating large tracts of land — not so largely used, though, nor for as many acres, as, in justice to the country, they should be. By the by, why could not the people have been more liberal in christening this valley, or that of the same name in Santa Clara County? There seems to be no lack of saints in the calendar, and I can't see why it was necessary to flatter this one female saint's vanity by naming two of the most charming valleys in the State after her. The Santa Clara, "of these parts," has, perhaps, the better right to the appellation, on account of the calm river of that name gliding through its even, grassy fields. There are no gigantic trees bordering its low banks, only a group of cottonwoods; and their image upon the smooth-flowing waters, where the stage bowls along its course, and crosses the shallow stream.

When evening set in, it was so deliciously warm and balmy that I concluded to ride outside with the driver, till we should reach the very late supper station. I had counted on the moon's coming up some time late in the evening; but as I never could succeed in becoming thoroughly acquainted with the vagaries and wanderings of this orb, I found that it grew darker and darker, till, at last, I asked of the driver, "Where's the moon?" "Tain't his night out," was the reply; and I resigned myself to a moonless ride, for I would not for the world have asked to be let inside, though every bush did look like a band of highwayman, and every tree like a gallows with a ring of ghosts dancing around it. . . .



# The Wet Winter of 1884

By W. R. H. Weldon

In the year of 1883, my father, Salmon R. Weldon, acquired a part of the Rancho Canada Larga y Verde. There was about 3000 acres, located five miles north of Ventura on the Ojai Road. The central valley of the rancho, as its name indicates, was lovely and green, and stretched back into the hills some five or six miles or so, heading into the Sulphur Mountain (Monte Asufre). It is about half a mile wide with hills on either side from 300' to 500' high. Adjoining us about two miles on the east was the ranch of Mr. A. Canet, and still further on was the ranch of Mr. Lewis Walker.

As this valley approaches the valley of the Ventura River the hills close in till there is but little more than room for the creek and the road. On the north side, a perpendicular cliff is lifted up a couple of hundred feet or so. This cliff is slightly overhanging toward the top which makes it suitable for the swallows to build their nests and in those days there were hundreds of these birds twisting and turning overhead. From this prominent natural feature we called our new ranch the "Swallow Cliff Ranch" and it was so-called as long as we lived there. However, as soon as we built our barns about a quarter of a mile north of the cliff, the swallows deserted it and used the barns for their nesting places; which made the name inappropriate so that it has since been dropped.

In December of 1883 my father and family, consisting of my mother, sister and myself, moved down from our home at Santa Barbara. About a quarter mile north of the cliff, Canada la Brea breaks through the hills and a little arroyo leads down the valley to join the Ventura River. Overlooking the river, my father had built our home. (1) Across the riverbed and considerably higher above the stream than our house, was the home of Ygnacio (Natcho) Rodriguez. A half mile south of our home, on the east bank of the riverbed, the Moraga family had an adobe house with a huge grape vine trellised over the patio. (2) A half mile east from Moraga's across the Ojai road, on a little knoll overlooking the stream that flows out of Canada Larga, was the home of Mr. A. Mayhew and family. (3) These were our only neighbors that could be reached, close by, without crossing a stream.

With the exception of a light shower on December 21, as shown by my father's dairy, the fall and into January had been dry, with west winds blowing day after day. The farmers and stockmen were discouraged. One day in January '84, I remember I was sowing a field of barley where the house and orchard of the Canets are now located, when Mr. Baldwin, manager of the big ranch up Coyote Creek, (4) passed by. He was a small man and was known as "el patron chiquito" (the little boss). He called out to me, "Hello, Will, you are



choosing a big granary for your barley, but it will keep and be ready for next year when the rains come then."

On January 26th the weather changed and a light S.E. wind commenced to blow, and about 9 p.m. the rain came. Rain fell steadily all night and the diary entries showed day after day, "heavy rains, heavy rains." On February 5th, the entry was "twelve inches of rain have fallen here, 14 inches in Ventura, and much more up in the Ojai Valley." Another entry that same day recorded that my father and I had gone to see Mr. A. Canet to "bargain" with him about the ranch lines. The diary continued to record "heavy rains" both night and day, until the culmination came the night of February 16th. I remember clearly that day as, in spite of the almost continuous rains, the river was flowing only about 100 feet wide, and four or five feet deep. The dry soil had absorbed the rain as it fell. The river itself was within its narrow banks which wandered from side to side of the quarter mile-wide river bed.

As the day darkened the rain fell more steadily and heavily than it had at any time, and without a single let-up during the entire night. At daybreak my mother called excitedly for me to come at once to the back of the house, and there, was a sight never to be forgotten. An angry torrent filled the riverbed from bank to bank, a full quarter of a mile or more, and 25 feet deep. Enormous riffles forced up by the boulders on the bottom were thrown up from ten to fifteen feet above the surface of the river. The roar of the rapidly flowing water, and clashing of boulders, made a din that was heard for miles away in the hills. On the day before, a growth of willows and alders forty to fifty feet high, had covered the riverbed. These had been swept clean, while the flood showed many great oaks and sycamores floating down, their roots and branches tossed wildly above the surface, and now and then the debris from a house.

The flood had raised the river's surface until it was but a foot or two below the floor of our house, and perhaps four or five feet from the house. The rainfall causing the flood was in the Ojai Valley where the gauge showed ten inches in ten hours, and in Matilija Canyon where the fall must have been heavier still.

At 10 o'clock A.M. (Feb. 17th) the flow from Canada la Brea was still not excessive and I was able to cross to the barn on the north of the arroyo to get my saddle horse. I rode over to Mr. Mayhew's to see if he could give us refuge, as our house seemed to be in danger of being swept away. He promised to come at once with his team and wagon. In the meantime the rainfall had increased to cloudburst proportions in both the Canada la Brea and Canada Larga. Before Mr. Mayhew could hitch his team to the wagon, the water in Canada Larga became a flood carrying away his barn and wagon while he just managed to escape with his life, and his horses. His house was on higher ground and seemed safe so he came at once to our house with his team leaving it for us while he returned to his home on foot.



I took his two horses and my saddle horse and we four Weldons climbed on and started for the Mayhew's.

While these events were taking place, Canada la Brea had been taking its turn overflowing its banks, carrying away the bridge at Djai road and covering the fields with water from one to three feet deep. However, the horses were sturdy and well behaved, we waded through the deepest three foot flood and managed to reach the Mayhew's in safety, if not in comfort. The water from Canada Larga had risen to the door sill but had begun to recede and no serious damage had been done to the Mayhew house. Soon after we had been taken in, four of the Moraga family of eight, the quite elderly father and mother, a son and daughter in their teens, were also given refuge by the Mayhews. That night eleven of us spent in the little four room house, sleeping on the floor in our clothing but thankful to our good neighbors for the refuge that kept us safe from the flood.

By the morning of the 20th, it was plain that the waters were receding so we returned to our house. The water had entered and there were several inches of mud on the floor, but no real damage was done to the house.

From the beginning of the storm on January 26th, there was no real cessation of the rain. A week of steady rain, a day or two of clearing weather a west wind and then a repetition of the rain — and so till the first week of April. I have no actual record of the total rainfall but it was commonly believed to be about 50 inches. (5)

An interesting follow-up of the heavy winter rain was that in the 24 hours of June 12, 1884, there was a very heavy rainfall, one and three quarter-inches as shown by the diary. In my 73 years (1945) in California I am positive there has been no comparable rainfall in the coast region of Santa Barbara or Ventura Counties.

W. R. H. Weldon, Feb. 21, 1945 (6)

## NOTES

1. Present site of City Water Plant.
2. Present Kingston property.
3. Present Orr property.
4. Probably Rancho Casitas.
5. 36.13 in. according to table published by Ventura Free Press. (1909).
6. Mr. Weldon had been engaged in ranching and cattle for some fifteen years. About 1898, with Mr. G. S. Barnes, he established the Channel Commercial Co., a wholesale grocery firm. Early in the 1900s he moved to Pasadena, and some years later organized what was probably the first chain food market in California. This business was bought by Safeway. Mr. Weldon then started another chain of markets in which he was active until the time of his death.



## Miscellany

From the files of the Ventura SIGNAL

The latest importations in white garments are in the shape of combinations, throwing two or three pieces into one. The chemise, corset cover and drawers in one instance, form a single bewildering garment; or for a variation, the short petticoat, corset cover, and chemise are combined. New Knickerbocker drawers have puffs over the knees, and are mighty handy to kneel in, particularly for women with protruding knee pans. Oct. 2, 1880.

\* \* \* \*

Some idiot in the east writes to us anxiously inquiring if the Santa Clara River is navigable. It is — for balloons. April. 22, 1882.

\* \* \* \*

Stephan Riley, a son-in-law of Ari Hopper called Dr. Bard on Wednesday last to attend to a cut in the foot made by an axe. The great toe was almost severed from the foot. The doctor rode out thirty miles in his buggy, then ten miles on horseback over a rugged trail and this journey back made eighty miles in one day to see a patient. The life of a California physician is not a particularly pleasant one. May 13, 1882.

\* \* \* \*

The pipeline mania has spread among the honey-men. An Ojai genius who has "got it bad" wants to pipe honey down from the Ojai to Ventura. His idea is original, to say the least. If he will send us his name we will publish his communication. March 1, 1879.

\* \* \* \*

The undersigned will receive sealed bids up to Wednesday, May 28, for the transportation of the Ventura Base Ball Club to Los Angeles. The time to be occupied in the journey must not exceed four days. Right reserved to reject any and all bids. Bid must be offered irrespective of number to be transported, but shall not exceed twelve persons. Address H. Stevens, San Buenaventura. April 24, 1880.

\* \* \* \*

A Missouri Club is talked of in our County. It will have for its objectives; Put none but Missourians in office, the encouragement of the old Missouri language and the furtherance of the interests of Missourians generally. Its motto will be, "Bill, put out the fire and call the dog."  
1883. (Date torn off)

## CHARTER MEMBERS

### LIFE

Mrs. Edith H. Hoffman  
Mrs. Grace H. Smith

### SUSTAINING

Richard Bard  
Adolpho Camarillo

### ACTIVE

Mr. and Mrs. Jess Allee  
A. D. Alvord  
A. Elizabeth Anderson  
Margaret E. Balden  
Chas. F. Blackstock  
Arthur H. Blanchard  
Sarah E. Blanchard  
Henry M. Borchard  
John W. Borchard  
Mrs. Alice Borgstrom  
Hazel Brown  
Mr. and Mrs. Oran B. Brown  
Cabrillo Parlor No. 114 NSGW  
Mrs. D. A. Cameron  
Mrs. Marie-Louise Canet  
Jos. G. Cardona  
Jas. A. Cook  
Glen D. Corey  
County Stationers  
Esther Cummings  
John F. Cummings  
Louis Drapeau  
Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Dudley  
Roger G. Edwards  
El Aliso Parlor No. 314, NDGW  
C. C. Elkins  
F. L. Fairbanks  
G. S. Faulkner  
W. J. Fourt  
Mrs. Jeanne Garnier  
Adolyn U. Garrison

Mr. and Mrs. H. Waite Gerry  
Ellen E. Guthrie  
L. H. Hall  
A. C. Hardison  
Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Harwood  
Grant W. Heil  
Burt F. Henderson  
Edward Henderson  
F. Hal Higgins  
Del King  
Mrs. Hattie King  
Warren King  
John A. Lagomarsino  
Thos. A. Langford  
Alexis La Peyre  
Las Tres Vistas Parlor  
No. 302, NDGW  
Paul J. Leavens  
Guy E. Lewis  
Mrs. C. A. Lind  
Helen D. Lofgren  
Jas. A. McBride  
Mrs. Eulalee McMullen  
Edna Michel  
Mrs. Myrtle Moore  
J. H. Morrison  
Mrs. Joy Muir  
Mrs. Nora Mundell  
Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Nieland  
Mrs. Verna A. Olivier  
Mrs. Ida V. Olsen  
Chas. F. Outland  
Mrs. E. G. Outland  
R. G. Percy  
Mrs. Armando Pezzi  
E. M. Pfeiler, Sr.  
Robert Pfeiler  
Mrs. Rafaelita O. Philbrick  
Carl Phleger  
Robert I. Plomert  
Jos. P. Reardon  
Mrs. Dorothy P. Rentaria  
James A. Roth  
Mr. and Mrs. Jos. H. Ru  
Mrs. Alma G. Sexton  
H. C. Sharp  
Mrs. Agnes Slatten  
Mrs. Georgia Strasser  
Mr. and Mrs. C. P. Strick  
E. D. Stuart  
Mr. and Mrs. Wm. J. Su  
Mrs. C. C. Teague  
Viola Tharp  
Albert J. Thille  
Mr. and Mrs. John P. Thill  
Miss Agnes Toland  
Mrs. T. O. Toland  
E. L. Van Dellen  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Russell Wal  
Mrs. Katherine S. Weaver  
Mrs. Lou C. Wright  
Mrs. Edna Zinnecher

### ACTIVE (NONCHARTER)

Mrs. Geo. Anderson  
Mrs. M. J. Boynton  
Geo. Dickson  
E. Otis Draper  
Edwin G. Heier  
F. Hal Higgins  
Mrs. Gladys Kennedy  
B. J. Loughman  
L. Leon Pressey  
Leo A. Smith  
W. E. Smith  
Chas. M. Teague  
Title Ins. and Trust Co.

\* \* \* \*

## HALF A CENTURY OF SERVICE

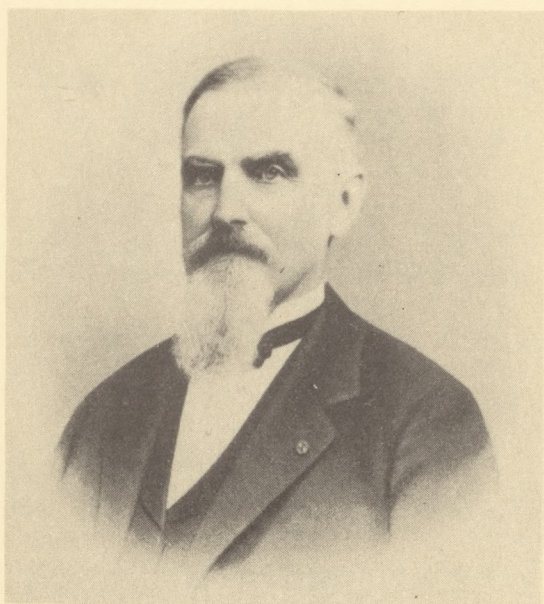
Reserved for business firms that are sustaining members of the Historical Society, and that have been serving the people of Ventura County for 50 years or more.

**Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Co.** Organized on April 4, 1898 with E. P. Foster, president, N. W. Blanchard, vice president, and Charles Barnard, secretary. For over 57 years this old Ventura County business firm has faithfully followed the high standards set by its pioneer organizers.

**Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association.** Organized in April 1890 as the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association with J. R. Hall, president, Caspar Taylor, vice-president, and H. H. Youngken, secretary. For 65 years this organization has served the interests of home owners and builders, as well as those of the investor.



*The*  
VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*QUARTERLY*



**CEPHAS L. BARD, M.D.**

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BARSDALE  
FIRST OIL DEVELOPMENT  
THE WORKS OF DR. CEPHAS L. BARD

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VOL. 1, NO. 2

FEBRUARY, 1956

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# **The Ventura County Historical Society**

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The Ventura County Historical Society's headquarters is the Pioneer Museum, 77 North California Street, Ventura, California. There are three classes of membership—active, \$5 per year, sustaining, \$25 per year and life, \$100.

The QUARTERLY is published in February, May, August and November from the Society's headquarters at the Pioneer Museum. The present editorial staff is composed of Chas. F. Outland, Chairman, and Grant Heil, with the assistance and advice of the Society's officers.

The Society assumes no responsibility for the statements or opinions of authors of various articles. All communications should be addressed to the Society at the Pioneer Museum. Memberships include subscription to the QUARTERLY. Additional copies are available at \$1.00 each.



# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

VOL. 1

FEBRUARY, 1956

NO. 2

## The 1860's

The history of the decade 1860-1870 in the region of what is now Ventura County has many facets. Few permanent settlers had as yet come to the area. It was a period of transition from "cattle on a thousand hills" at the beginning to one of land-hungry emigrants from the east settling on the ranchos of the bankrupt Californians toward the end. Nature did her worst by sending a tremendous flood in 1861-62, and then followed it with three of the driest years on record. The Americans who were here in the first half of the decade were of an unsavory character, generally speaking. The mountainous terrain served as an ideal hideout for the renegades who had escaped the wrath of various vigilante committees around the state.

One of the first American settlers in the Santa Clara Valley was Jefferson Crane. He left a record of these early days in the form of a narrative dictated to E. M. Sheridan in 1921. Like other recollections of this type, where considerable time has elapsed between the events and their reporting, Crane's story probably suffers somewhat in accuracy. However, his is the only original source of many personalities and events of that day.

Another important development of the period was the first crude attempt to utilize the oil resources of the county. Long known to the Indians and Spaniards, the oil seepages were finally brought to the attention of the Americans, who eventually were to parlay a few tunnels into a multi-million dollar industry.

In 1868 a young doctor, just out of Jefferson Medical College, moved to Ventura to practice his profession and endear himself for all time in the hearts of the pioneer settlers. If all the folklore, legends and anecdotes concerning Dr. Cephas L. Bard could be collected into one volume, the reader would be in for a superb treat. Space does not permit more than a brief review of the doctor's literary efforts, a little known side of Bard.

# The Narrative of Jefferson Crane

*As Told to E. M. Sheridan in 1921*

## PART I

As the residence of my wife and myself in this valley dates back fifty-five years from December last (1921), I have been requested to contribute my mite to the story of Ventura County. Had the matter been taken up at an earlier date a more masterly hand could have been found to do the work, but as wife and I are the last of the small band of Americans we found pioneering here fifty-five years ago, who are still on this side of the Great Divide, the task seems to have fallen on our shoulders from force of circumstance. Most of this writing will, of necessity, be personal as it will chronicle the part we ourselves have taken in the development and affairs of this valley that, sixty years ago, was one large mustard patch.

Its endless acres brought forth only its native grasses upon which subsisted large herds of native cattle, small bands of sheep and goats and the horses upon which people rode to tend their herds. These herds constituted the main food supply of the people and the sole source of revenue. As long as the season supplied the food for these herds the life of the people was just pastime and, in its way, was enjoyed.

In the county as now constituted, I cannot recall more than fifteen inhabited homes outside the then small town of San Buenaventura, which consisted of that portion of Main St. west of the Mission Church. Not a habitation east or southeast.

I was born in Sharon, Medina County, Ohio, June 17, 1839. Like Lincoln, it was in a log cabin that I first saw the light of day, but unlike Lincoln I have not yet been made President and am fast losing faith that I ever will be. My parents were early settlers of Ohio who pioneering upon a heavily timbered piece of land, literally chopped their way into sunlight and a home. They and their children endured all the privations of pioneer life. My wife was born in Cummington, Berkshire Co., Mass., July 30, 1840. We were married October 4, 1861. On the 7th of the same month we, in company with Dr. B. B. Briggs, his wife and daughter, set out on our journey to California there to make our future homes. We went by rail to New York City and from there sailed on the steamship Northern Light to the Isthmus of Panama, crossing the Isthmus by rail to Panama City and sailing thence to San Francisco on the steamer Uncle Sam, spending in all twenty-eight days at sea. We had friends in Marysville, Calif. and there we went. After a few days at Marysville, uncle and I started out on a visit to this (Santa Clara) valley. The More Bros., then owners of ranchos Santa Paula Y Saticoy, Sespe, Lompoc and Santa Rosa Island, were born in the same township as I, so through them we had some knowledge of this section and before leaving our Ohio home had determined to at least visit this valley before settling down in California.

On arriving in the valley we found Thos. W. Moore and family, also George Orcutt (a brother-in-law) and wife, living in the adobe



house now standing on the Edwards tract (1). When we left Marysville about Nov. 10th, there had been no rain for some months. The country was brown and barren of all vegetation and roads were axle deep with dust from the team traffic to and from the mines. There was nothing to please the eye except the distant mountains. This section had been visited with heavy rains in early September and seasonable showers had followed. Consequently, here the scene was changed. The valley and the surrounding hills were clothed in their finest robes of green, the herds were luxuriating in the richest of pasture and everything pointed toward prosperity and we were made captive to it.

We were offered our choice of land on the ranch and we chose what is now Santa Paula, including the Blanchard orchard, with water from Santa Paula Creek. The price was \$3 an acre. We returned to Marysville—by stage to San Francisco and boat the rest of the way. At San Jose we encountered a heavy rainstorm, the first of the season for the northern part of the state, which proved to be a flood. The Sacramento Valley was a great inland sea, no land to be seen from the boat, homes standing in water, hay and straw stacks covered with cattle and horses as the only place of refuge for them. Every house in the city of Sacramento stood in at least two feet of water on the highest ground. Marysville was in like condition. The steamer sailed over the tops of trees in Uncle's 300-acre orchard. In 1864 I became acquainted with Mr. Sprague, then Santa Barbara County Surveyor, a civil engineer of ability. He told me that in the year 1846 he was all over the grounds of Sacramento City and took measurements of flood wood lodged in trees sixteen feet above the land. When this flood occurred he did not know, as there was no record other than the mute driftwood to tell the story.

On our arrival at Marysville we found G. G. Briggs (2) and family just returned from the east. We told him what we had seen and had determined to return to, and he said he would return with us. It was on this visit to this section that George Briggs bought what has since been known as the Briggs Ranch, paying the sum of \$45,000 cash for the entire ranch of four leagues, as called for in the Santa Paula Y Saticoy grant, (3). Being a strong temperance man he conceived the idea of establishing a temperance colony on the land (4). He brought his family down, also the wife and daughter of his brother. Wife and I worked for him that first season. Vegetation was so large we mowed by hand as we could not plow, but we cleared ten acres which we planted to corn, beans, potatoes, melons, also a garden. Everything grew to perfection and it was a revelation to the Indians to see things grow without pouring on water through the dry season. Mr. Briggs brought a schooner load of lumber, 1000,000 feet (sic), mostly fencing, and 10,000 redwood posts, from Santa Cruz. Many of these posts are doing duty today (1921), fifty-four years after. The fence from Harwood barranca to Flint corner is of posts from this lot. Mr. Briggs built a home in Santa Paula, to which he moved his family. It stood on Main St. about two blocks west of Blanchard's packing house. In 1862 his wife died there and the loss so upset him that he



returned to Marysville and never returned to Ventura County. Before going, however, in 1862-63, he prepared the ground and planted an orchard of 160 acres on what is now the Edwards place, near the old adobe. He also fenced all the land between Harmon Barranca and the one west of it, which included the Mound and Montalvo. Here he planted 400 acres of walnut trees. He bought the nuts of some trees then standing in the Mission orchard at San Buenaventura. He dug some wells in the high lands west of Saticoy but got no water.

After my uncle, G. G. Briggs, abandoned Santa Paula as a home wife and I thought it too lonesome to go there so we located in the Mound fields, near the forks of the Saticoy and Conejo roads. Here I built a house and dug a well. I found water at 100 feet but it was as salt as the ocean. This looked discouraging for uncle. He then conceived the idea of going deeper and secured Geo. S. Gilbert and his oil drilling outfit to try for water (5). The place selected was on what is now the Marion Cannon ranch. They went down nearly 300 ft when the pipe stuck and they could go no further.

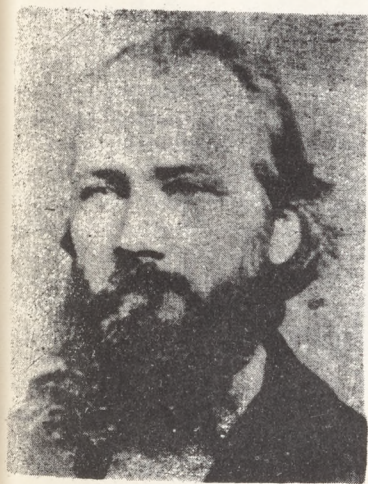
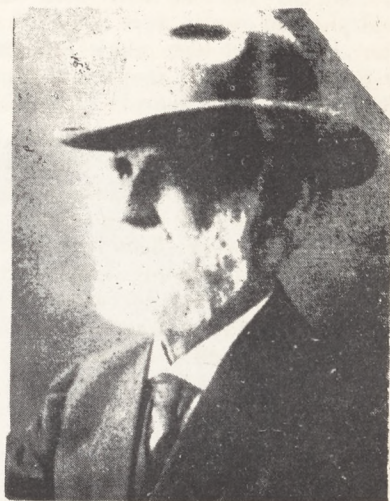
The winter of 1863-64 was a dry one; not enough rain fell to germinate the grass seed. As a consequence, 90% of all domestic animals of the county died of starvation.

With the removal of Mr. Briggs to Oakland with his family, there was an end of the colonization scheme. I turned my attention to teaching and obtained the boys school at Santa Barbara. There was no co-education in those days. I had about 40 boys of ages from six to eighteen years, most of whom were of native parentage. There had been several years of school and I had expected to find some progress, there was very little. Discipline was a negligible quantity, they walked about the room, talked, whistled and threw paper balls and beans at each other. Call a class and it would gather about me in the same order as a band of sheep and when returning to their seats it was reasonably certain that there would be at least one fist fight on the way. On the playground it was not always peaceful. Arriving one morning at the school I found there had been a free fight in which several boys had participated and in which fists, clubs and a knife had been used. The City Fathers took cognizance of it and straightened out the affair. It became my duty to bring order out of the existing chaos so I made it a rule to be continually on the school grounds and I also procured a rawhide whip from a saddlery. By noon of the first day the new whip had been applied eight times, and by the close of the day thirteen had fallen under the lash. The next day showed five less. Each day showed a decrease in the punishment. It took many days to bring the punishment to zero, but it arrived there and the school turned out well. I often met with the boys in after years and on each occasion they referred to their school days with pleasure.

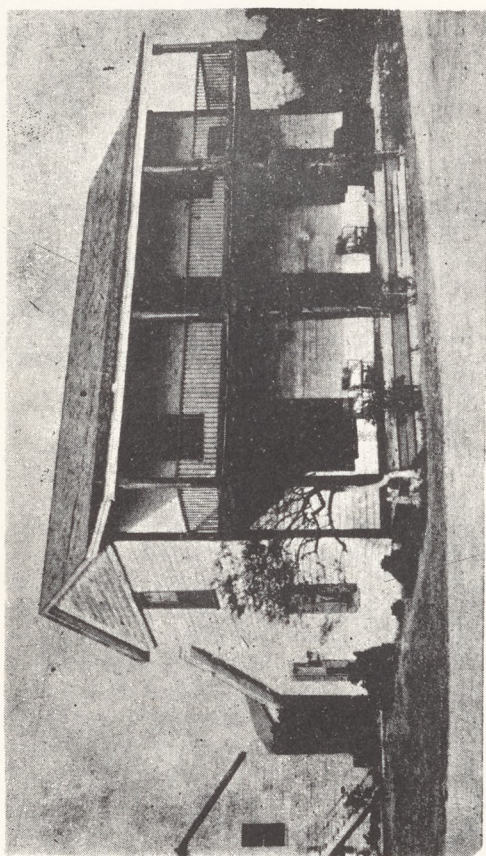
The year 1864 being a very dry year it brought in its wake a period of high living costs. Flour went to \$15 a barrel, barley 4c. lb., potatoes the same, sugar 15c, beans 15c, bacon 30c; and I began to think it would be better to go back to the soil and grow potatoes—so I did so.



**JEFFERSON CRANE**



**GEORGE G. BRIGGS**



# **OLD ADOBE, EDWARDS RANCH**

**Redwood siding was added in recent years.**

—Brooke Sawyer Jr. Photo

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In August I gave up the school and came back to the ranch. I got the water out on what is now the Beckwith place and planted thirty acres of potatoes. The steamer Kalorama brought the seed from San Francisco to Ventura. This was the first vessel to enter the port of San Buenaventura under steam. In 1876 she went ashore there—hence Kalorama St. It was thought that with water one could plant and successfully grow potatoes any month of the year. This proved not to be the case that year, for on the nights of November 16, 17, and 18 there was a cold wave which made ice an inch and a half thick when my potatoes were a third grown. In my 55 years I have not known such another cold wave. But fortune still followed the potato. I dug the earliest and obtained about 500 bags, hauled them to Ventura and put them aboard a schooner owned by the Santa Cruz Island Co. for shipment to San Francisco. Twenty-eight days later I heard they were in Santa Barbara. The schooner encountered a storm off Monterey and came back to Santa Barbara under bare poles. I had the potatoes transferred to a steamer at \$10 a ton and half freight for the schooner. In October I irrigated fifty acres and planted barley hoping to get an early harvest, but the harvest did not materialize as expected, for the barley ripened no earlier than that planted two or three months later. There were headers in those days. I paid \$2.50 an acre to mow the barley, 25c per hundred for threshing, and then sold the crop for \$1 per hundred. After eighteen months of hard labor I closed up all transactions in this line and my books showed considerably more loss than profit.

In the year 1867 George G. Briggs contracted with E. B. Higgins that the last-named party might subdivide and colonize the Rancho Santa Paula Y Saticoy. I believe this to be the first subdivision of a large land holding made in Southern California. Under this contract the ranch was divided into 150-acre lots (6) except that portion lying east of the west line of lot 1. This lot was originally purchased by E. S. Wooley, later by George S. Sewell. East of this line was to be builded the town of Santa Paula. Main and River (now Harvard) streets were laid out as now. The land lying between these streets was laid off in 10 and 20 acre lots, the 10 acre lots running half way between the streets, the 20 acre lots all the way. The number of these lots I do not know, but I bought the most easterly of them and the Universalist Church stands on the northeast portion of this lot.

Ignoring the present corporate limits of the town, the first house built was by Alexander Gray. Taking the corporate limits into consideration the house that George S. Sewell so long lived in was the first, as it was the first built in the valley after the subdivision of the ranch. A man by the name of Johnson bought the lot east of Gray and built near the present pumping plant. The two Parson brothers bought the next ten acres and built a small house. I built the next one in March, 1867, and it was long known as the Snuffins house. In 1869 E. B. Higgins had some small lots laid out east and north of my twenty acres. On these lots the first building erected was a saloon built by

William Gordon (7). This stood where the Farmers and Merchants Bank now stands.

The first school was taught by Augusta Stevens. It was in a small building standing on what is now Dana Teague's lemon orchard (8). The first religious Protestant service held in the valley was in 1867, under the pepper trees at the Orchard Ranch, Rev. Starr officiating. The first school district comprised the whole ranch and was organized in 1867 and named Saticoy. The first deed of valley lands was made by E. B. Higgins to Wm. Montgomery. It was for 75 acres which in 1868 became the property of J. H. Gries.

### NOTES

1. Built in 1860 by W. D. Hobson, this adobe is still being used today.
2. An interesting reference to Mr. Briggs' farming activities in the Marysville area is found in *An Overland Journey, Etc.* by Horace Greeley, New York, 1860, page 336.
3. This grant comprised 18,000 acres, and was bought by Briggs at \$2.50 per acre.
4. Mr. Briggs did not have the same antipathy for gambling that he had for strong drink. He staged two lotteries, the cash receipts for which amounted to \$443,300! For details of these extravaganzas see *Grizzly Bear* magazine, January and March, 1911.
5. The drilling equipment referred to here must have been very primitive. Gilbert supposedly secured his oil from seepages and tunneling. If Crane is correct, Gilbert must be given credit for at least having the first "portable" drilling rig in California.
6. Many old-timers thought they were buying a full quarter section, 160 acres.
7. Billie Gordon is reputed to have ended his career in a most novel manner. Carrying a load of dynamite he walked across the Santa Clara River and over South Mountain until he came to a place he fancied. Arranging the dynamite in a comfortable position he used it for a chair and set it off. The "remains" were brought back to town in an old-fashioned cracker can.
8. Present site of the Glen City School.



# Bardsdale

By F. L. FAIRBANKS

R. G. Surdam, father of Bardsdale, was born in Dutchess County, New York, on August 11, 1835, according to early histories of Ventura County. We are especially interested in him because he was the County's first realtor.

He came to California in 1854, and to Ventura County in 1866. His first real estate venture was not at Bardsdale but at Ojai, where he purchased 1700 acres from Thomas R. Bard and laid the beginnings of the Town of Nordhoff, whose name was later changed to Ojai. Later, in 1887, he bought from Thomas R. Bard about 1500 acres, lands purchased by Bard from the More family. Surdam advertised this tract on a grand scale for those days, one of his advertisements appearing in a recent brochure published by Title Insurance and Trust Company and generously distributed by that corporation. The booklet was entitled "The Story of Ventura County." In some of the literature put out by Surdam he made extravagant claims for the land, and Bard feeling that his name had been used without authorization, made public contradiction of some of the statements and offered to buy back at cost any parcels which the purchaser felt had been misrepresented.

In Southern California water is ever more important than the land on which it is to be used, so concurrently with the Subdivision there was organized Southside Improvement Company, a California corporation, whose Articles were filed on February 28, 1887. It was organized for the purpose of furnishing domestic and irrigating water to the new community. To each 10-acre parcel of land was assigned 20 shares of stock in the corporation. The first directors were Thomas R. Bard, Cephas L. Bard, R. G. Surdam, E. O. Gerberding and F. W. Gerberding, the two latter being brothers-in-law of Thomas R. Bard.

The eastern boundary of the Bardsdale Tract was the present Chambersburg Road, which is a part of the highway from Fillmore to Moorpark.

As near as I can check from the records in the office of the County Recorder the first deed from Surdam conveying land in the Tract was issued to Bernhard Broderson, the second to America Philbrook and the third to Henry Klages. The map of the Tract was recorded in Book 2, page 139 of Miscellaneous Records in the office of the County Recorder of Ventura County. The map says the tract contains 1297.67 acres.

Through the courtesy of Clarence R. Young, secretary of the Southside Improvement Company now and for many years past, I have had access to the old minutes of Southside. From an economic side they give almost a full history of the growth of the community. For about the first twenty years of the life of Southside the place of business of the water company was at Hueneme. I became a book-keeper and teller in Bank of Hueneme in 1895, where Southside



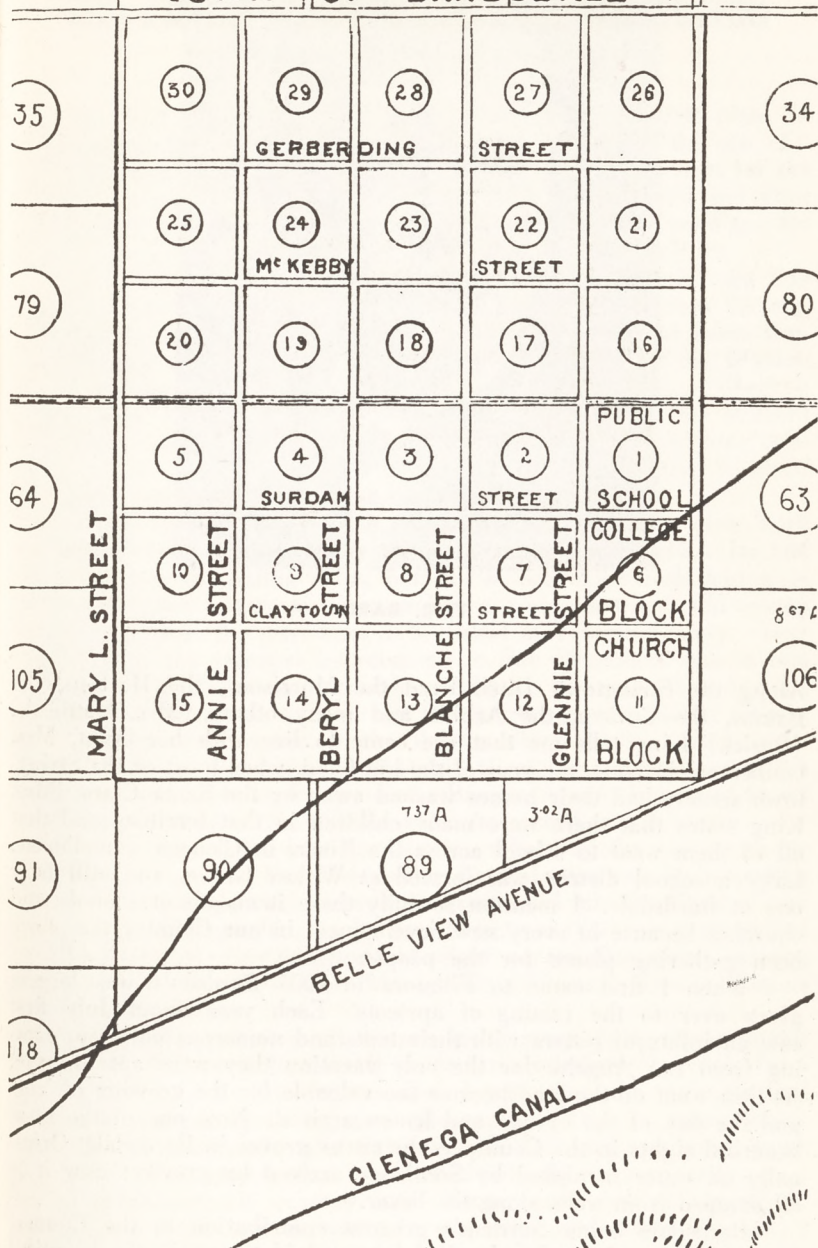
then kept their funds. I can still remember seeing James Walker, Sr., Geo. N. King, J. R. McKee, Geo. A. Wengert, Diedrich Bartels and others of their stockholders in Hueneme on their meeting days. All of these men were part of the backbone of Bardsdale. J. R. McKee was for years the agent of Bard in the sale of lands. Later Geo. N. King served in the same capacity. While working for Bank of Huene-me I had an opportunity to see the generous attitude of Mr. Bard toward all of these Bardsdale settlers. He was president of the Bank, Maj. Thos. J. Gregg the cashier. I recall hearing Maj. Gregg say to Mr. Bard one day that we had too much money on hand and the demand for loans was slow. Mr. Bard said, "I have quite a number of mortgages on Bardsdale property and would be willing to let you have some of them. However, it must be with the understanding that if you need your money at any time you must not annoy or bother the mortgagors. Just charge the paper back to my account." Many of the early settlers in Bardsdale told me after I came to Fillmore that if it had not been for the liberal attitude of Mr. Bard they would have had to lose their lands.

At a very early date there was organized in Bardsdale a German Evangelical Church. According to Mrs. Willis Burson (born Kate Baldeschwieler) the Sunday morning service was in German and the evening service in English. I think Mrs. Burson is the only living attendant of these services, but the descendants of the early day members are among the best known and most respected members of the community. You run across the names Haase, Hassheider, Michel, Bartels, Baldeschwieler (later changed to Balden), Ritzmann, Wengert and many others in the records. With the passage of time and the birth of another generation the Evangelical Church ceased to appeal to the community and the Bardsdale Methodist Church was organized. In 1948 they celebrated the 50th anniversary of the founding of the latter. Mrs. Willis Burson wrote a History of the Bardsdale Church in which she said: "As nearly as can be ascertained services were first conducted in Bardsdale German Evangelical Church under the auspices of the Methodist Church by Rev. George Alexander some time in 1892." The Methodist Church was organized in 1898. Her history abounds with the sacrifices made by the community to start and then to maintain their Church. Bardsdale has always been a strongly religious community and the Church has been a rallying point for many community efforts. Mrs. Burson states in her history that the lots for the Church building were given by Thomas R. Bard, and that he made other substantial donations also.

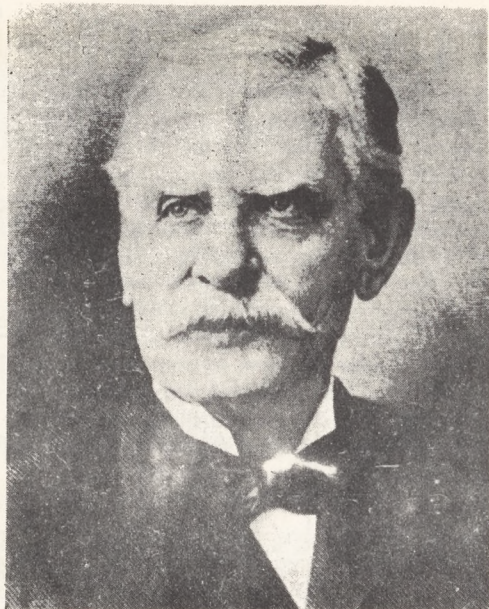
I suppose that one writing the story of Bardsdale should preface it with a reference to an earlier settlement, Stringtown, so called because it was a settlement in which the homes were along what was called Stringtown Ditch, one of the early day water rights in the County. The Stringtown Ditch had its beginning about two miles East of Chambersburg Road and ran as far West as that Road. S. A. Guiberson and wife settled East of that and raised a large family on lands now owned by the Shiells family. Their home dates from 1860.



# TOWN<sup>OF</sup> OF BARDSDALE



THE PROPOSED TOWNSITE OF BARDSDALE  
From the Surdam map of 1887



**T. R. BARD**

Along the Stringtown Ditch lived the Morrisons, the Hortons, the Baums, the Curlees, the Azbills and many others. Mrs. Hattie V. (Busick) King tells me that she came to live with her Aunt, Mrs. Guiberson, in 1884, the year of the big flood, when most of the Stringtown settlers had their homes washed away by the Santa Clara. Mrs. King states that there were many children in that territory and that all of them went to school across the River, in Cienega schoolhouse. Later a school district was formed at Willow Grove, and still later one at Bardsdale. I mention so fully these items about schools and churches because in every new development in our Country they have been gathering places for the people.

When I first came to Fillmore in 1907 Bardsdale was largely given over to the raising of apricots. Each year about July first saw an influx of pitters with their tents and numerous children, coming from Los Angeles for the only vacation they were apt to have. As time went on the land became too valuable for the growing of 'cots and the day of the orange and lemon arrived. Now one of the most beautiful sights in the County is the citrus groves in Bardsdale. Originally all water furnished by Southside arrived by gravity: now it is all pumped from wells along the River.

Bardsdale being Surdam's greatest contribution to the County, it seems fitting that when he died he was laid to rest in the beautiful Bardsdale Cemetery, which looks out over the ranches that he was instrumental in starting.



# The First Oil Development in California

By R. G. PERCY

The first oil development west of Pennsylvania took place in Ventura County very shortly after the initial production in the east (1). Most historians have given credit to the Scott & Bard interests for the first such work. It is true that they did drill the first well and after five failures brought in the first producing well, but they were not the first to become interested in Ventura County's oil possibilities.

Some accounts say that George S. Gilbert came south from San Francisco first in 1854 to investigate oil seepage in Ventura County, others place the date as 1857. Ventura was then a part of Santa Barbara County and, except for a straggling village around the Mission and a number of big Spanish Grants, was a wilderness. Gilbert is said to have investigated these seepages in the canyon of the Ventura River and made some tests of the heavy, black oil which had long been known to the Californians and the Indians. He found that it could be refined into both illuminating oil and a heavy lubricant.

George Gilbert had been in the whale oil business in New York and later in San Francisco after coming to California in 1851. He had owned a fleet of whaling ships, but one by one his vessels had gone to sea and failed to return. He conceived the idea that he could recoup his fortunes from the petroleum to be found in Ventura County. After investigating the seepages he returned to San Francisco, and it was not until 1860 that he brought his son by his first marriage and his new bride to Ventura to live. In the following year, 1861, Gilbert began his oil development in the Ventura River Valley. The site is about one-half mile up the San Antonio Creek against the foot of the hills on the east side, near the present Rancho Arnaz. Here was an oil seepage coming out of the hillside which he opened with a tunnel.

A narrow road led from the Mission village up the canyon as far as the rancho home of Don Jose Arnaz. Beyond were only trails leading into the Rancho Santa Ana owned by Arnaz, and into the Rancho Ojai owned by Juan Camarillo. In Ventura County at this time were several prominent Californian families and eight or ten Americans, among them W. S. Chaffee, T. Wallace More, Volney Simpson, Thomas Dennis and W. D. Hobson.

Gilbert also collected oil from a big seepage in a canyon south and east of the Arnaz home and about three quarters of a mile from the first location. In this canyon oil and water flow for some distance down the canyon, spreading over the surface. It is a heavy, black crude which solidifies in cold weather until cattle are sometimes stuck in it. Like the first seepage, the oil is mixed with sulphur water.

Gilbert built his refinery near Ventura and hauled his oil in barrels with oxen and carretas. It was small and crude by today's standards, but he manufactured kerosene and lubricating oil (2). His first refinery burned, but his initial success was encouraging. He went to Los Angeles and built another. He bought land on the site of what



is Westlake Park today. His oil was secured from seepages near the pueblo. Again his refinery caught fire and burned and Gilbert returned to Ventura. He did not think enough of Los Angeles or the land that he bought to bother to pay the taxes and eventually allowed it to be sold for them. He continued to be interested in oil for a number of years, holding leases in the Santa Paula area with others, but he now went into the mercantile business in Ventura with W. S. Chaffee. The firm later became Chaffee, Gilbert & Bonestall.

Gilbert bought a home on Ventura Avenue and ranch property there and on the Rincon. His home was probably the first stucco house in Southern California, and was built by W. D. Hobson. It was two stories, built in the style of many California adobes, with a veranda across the front and a gallery above. His property on the Rincon has oil wells on three sides of it today and his Avenue home is not far from the rich Ventura Avenue oil field but Gilbert never profited greatly from the oil of California, although he was the pioneer developer (3). Four daughters were born to the Gilbert family in Ventura. The first daughter, Mrs. W. S. Dunshee (4), was probably the first child of American parents born in the village, although J. Hyde Chaffee was born about the same time. In 1870, in partnership with H. P. Flint and W. E. Barnard, Gilbert opened a general merchandise store in Hueneme and they laid out the townsite in that place.

Bard & Scott drilled the first well in search of oil on the site of the seepage on the east bank of San Antonio Creek, where Gilbert had done his first work. It did not increase the flow of oil from what had been developed by the tunnel run by Gilbert. This was known as the Number One well and until a few years ago was still flowing a mixture of oil and sulphur water. No oil has been found near these seepages, although many wells have been drilled nearby during the years. The Ventura Avenue Oil Field is several miles to the south. Gilbert's efforts at producing oil were four years before Bard & Scott.

#### NOTES

1. Oil was discovered in 1859, at Titusville, Pennsylvania, where more or less satisfactory results were obtained by refining kerosene.

2. In the records of San Buenaventura Justice Court of June 1863, we find that the Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue brought suit against George S. Gilbert for failure to secure a license to manufacture kerosene. Justice W. D. Hobson fined Gilbert (who did not appear in Court) the sum of \$100, plus interest and costs, a total of \$115.10.

3. It is probably safe to say that George Gilbert was the pioneer petroleum developer in California. His first experiments may have been carried on with Julio Peralta in Santa Paula Canyon. In an early copy of the *Signal*, it says that as early as 1854 Peralta dug pits to collect oil and hauled it to a refinery near Camulos. It is doubtful if there was any refinery at that early date. If Gilbert came to Ventura County in '54, as some authorities state, this may have been the experiment that he carried on and Peralta worked with him. There is a positive statement that Messrs. Stanford, Bishop & Hayward erected a small still on Rancho San Francisco in 1861. This was the same year that Gilbert built his original refinery in Ventura.

4. Mrs. Dunshee was the authority for most of this information about her father's operations, before her death. Articles in the *Signal* and early histories of the County verify her account of the first oil development.



# The Works of Dr. Cephas L. Bard

By CHAS. F. OUTLAND

Dr. Bard, the pioneer county physician, needs no introduction to the people of Ventura County. Dr. Bard, the man of letters, however, is an almost complete stranger to even the ardent devotee of Ventura County history. In compiling a list of the works of Bard, writings of a technical nature for the medical journals in the state have been omitted. These listed were printed separately, usually at the doctor's own expense, and distributed by him to his friends and fellow practitioners. All are now rare.

*A Contribution to the History of Medicine in Southern California.* By Cephas L. Bard, M.D., Ventura, Calif. Reprint from Southern California Practitioner, August, 1894. 29 pp.

This is the very rare first printing in separate form of Bard's most important work. Another edition, identical in content but with entirely different pagination (see Cowan, 1933 ed.), was printed for and distributed by the Southern California Medical Society. This is also quite rare today. The work was incompletely reprinted in *Touring Topics*, January, 1930, the portion concerning the first American medical men in the Southland being omitted.

The title is somewhat deceptive, the main body of the work dealing with the native Indian and early Spanish medical and surgical practices. Bard appears to have gained at least some of his information from the last of the local Indian tribes. In assaying the relative merits of the Indian and Spanish curative abilities, Bard rated the Indians as having been superior. The last part of the work is concerned with the early American medical men in Southern California. The rarity of this treatise is to be regretted as it is worthy of more consideration and study than it has received from students of California history.

Huntington, Southwest Museum and Los Angeles County Medical Libraries have copies of the edition noted by Cowan. Bancroft and the University of California Libraries also list the work. Locally, Blanchard Memorial Library has a photostat of the first edition and the Pioneer Museum and Ventura County Library have typewritten copies.

*The Climatic Surgical Advantages of Littoral Southern California.* Report of Committee on Surgery. By Cephas L. Bard, M.D., Chairman, Ventura. Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Medical Society of the State of California. April, 1896. Woodward & Co., Printers, San Francisco. 15 pp.

Despite the rather euphonious title, this rare little tract contains information of interest, particularly in regard to grizzly bear injuries. Bard relates, "So kindly was the healing process displayed in the terrible injuries inflicted by the teeth and claws of Bruin that there still exists the impression amongst mountaineers that such wounds

show a peculiar disposition to heal more quickly than others. It has been my fortune years ago to attend three persons mangled by the grizzly, and I was astonished at the rapidity of the reparation process." Bard attributes this healing miracle to the "salubrious" climate.

Southwest Museum has a copy. Typewritten copy at the Pioneer Museum.

*Disease as Described in Literature.* By Cephas L. Bard, M.D., of Ventura, Calif. (Annual address of the Retiring President of the Medical Society of the State of California, delivered at Fresno, April 19, 1898.) Reprinted from the "Pacific Medical Journal" May, 1898. W. A. Woodward & Co., Printers, San Francisco. 26 pp.

Although devoid of historical material, Bard's address will intrigue the reader with an interest in literature. It is also illustrative of the magnificent classical education possessed by the author.

This pamphlet is not listed by any of the libraries checked. The Pioneer Museum has a typewritten copy.

*The Ravages of the Bacillus Anthracis in California.* By Cephas L. Bard, M.D., Ventura, Calif. Reprint from Southern Calif. Practitioner, April, 1894. 12 pp.

At a time when the Surgeon-General was denying the existence of anthrax in the United States, Bard and Dr. Granville McGowan of Los Angeles were proving that this scourge of the ranges was responsible for large losses to cattle and sheep men in California. Bard gives the history and date of the introduction of the disease into Ventura County, an interesting story.

The University of California Library has the only copy located.

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## WANTED

### INFORMATION WANTED

The editorial staff of the *Quarterly* is anxious to secure any available information on the following two men:

"OLD MAN" MUTAH, also known as Mutua, Muta, Mutaw, Wm. Mutah. Anyone having knowledge of Mutah's nationality, birthplace, time of migration to the area in Ventura County that bears his name, or any other pertinent data, should communicate such information to the editor. Mutah was shot and killed on July 7, 1874, in the Piru Mining region by one—

JOHN CHAPMAN. Chapman is alleged to have shot Mutah in self-defense. Information as to Chapman's place of birth, age at the time of the killing and his whereabouts after his acquittal is earnestly sought by the authorities in charge of this *Quarterly*.

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## MISCELLANY

*From the Files of the VENTURA SIGNAL*

The engine at Scranton's blacksmith shop, at Santa Paula blew up one day last week. The crown sheet was blown out, on account of a scarcity of water in the boiler. Several spectators were standing near, but strange to say, no one was hurt. Mr. Scranton has gone to the city to get a new engine, and will resume business at an early date. March 1, 1879.

A Chinaman named Ah Wy died Wednesday and was buried with Celestial honors Thursday. "The Chinese must go." March 1, 1879.

Sheriff Detroy has issued invitations to a select necktie party at the Court House next Wednesday. Jan. 7, 1882.

The sheriff has taken all legal steps necessary for the execution of Vincente Garcia for the murder of Stanislaus, an Indian. The scaffold has been erected in the jail-yard, and the following invitation sent out as prescribed by law:

San Buenaventura, Jan. 4, 1882

Sheriff's Office, County of Ventura:

Sir: You are notified that the execution of Vincente Garcia for the murder of Stanislaus, an Indian, in this town on the 19th day of December, 1881, will take place at the Court House at San Buenaventura, Ventura County, Cal., on Wednesday the 11th day of January, 1882 between the hours of 11 A.M. and 3 P.M. You are most respectfully invited to be present.

JOS. DETROY

Sheriff, Ventura County

Jan. 7, 1882

Italy is now spoken of as the "Ventura of Europe." April 15, 1882.

If the party who purloined a hen and ten small chickens from the premises of S. N. Sheridan, on California Street, last Wednesday night, will return the hen, he may keep the chickens; or if he will return the chickens, he may keep the hen, and no questions asked. May 13, 1882.

The Maine Chaplain during the recent deadlock cried out, "O Lord, have compassion upon our bewildered representatives and senators. They have been sitting and sitting, and have hatched nothing. O Lord, let them arise from their nest and go home, and the praise shall be Thine." June 18, 1881.

An effort will be made to change the name of the Nordhoff Post Office to Ojai. June 18, 1882.

# MEMBERSHIP

## LIFE

Mrs. Edith H. Hoffman  
Mrs. Grace H. Smith

## SUSTAINING

Richard Bard  
Adolpho Camarillo

## Previously Unlisted Charter Members

The staff of the Quarterly regrets that the names of a few charter members as well as two active non-charter members were inadvertently omitted from the membership list in the November issue:

## CHARTER MEMBERS

Eliot M. Blanchard  
Mrs. Henry Bruns  
Mrs. John Bruns  
Miss Helen Hardison  
Mrs. Alma Thompson

## ACTIVE (NON-CHARTER)

W. W. Robinson  
Mrs. W. E. Smith

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Mrs. Gertrude Drown  
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Oswald A. Hunt  
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Mr. & Mrs. Wm. N. Shiells  
Geo. W. Simonson  
Southwest Museum Library  
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur F. Walden  
Hugh J. Weldon  
Richard D. Willet

## HALF A CENTURY OF SERVICE

Reserved for business firms that are sustaining members of the Historical Society, and that have been serving the people of Ventura County for 50 years or more.

*Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Co.* Organized on April 4, 1898 with E. P. Foster, president, N. W. Blanchard, vice president, and Charles Barnard, secretary. For over 57 years this old Ventura County business firm has faithfully followed the high standards set by its pioneer organizers.

*Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association.* Organized in April 1890 as the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association with J. R. Hall, president, Caspar Taylor, vice-president, and H. H. Youngken, secretary. For 65 years this organization has served the interests of home owners and builders, as well as those of the investor.



*The*  
VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*QUARTERLY*



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The Ventura County Historical Society's headquarters is the Pioneer Museum, 77 North California Street, Ventura, California. There are three classes of membership—active, \$5 per year, sustaining, \$25 per year and life, \$100.

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The Society assumes no responsibility for the statements or opinions of authors of various articles. All communications should be addressed to the Society at the Pioneer Museum. Memberships include subscription to the QUARTERLY. Additional copies are available at \$1.00 each.

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# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

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MAY, 1956

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## William Dewey Hobson

This issue of the *Quarterly*, covering as it does such items as newspapers, adobes and even a local gold rush, it seems timely to select for our cover portrait the picture of W. D. Hobson. Mr. Hobson has often been called "The Father of Ventura County," although the title is possibly a little unfair to the many other eminent men who worked for the formation of the new county along with him. Such prominent names as Bradley, Barry, Chaffee, Daly and Bard are almost as worthy of the honor as Hobson. However, these were the men who selected Mr. Hobson to be their voice in Sacramento when, after an earlier attempt had failed, a new County Division Bill was brought before the Legislature in the session of 1871-1872. These men chose well for there was only one dissenting vote in the Assembly.

Hobson had come to California at the time of the gold rush in 1849 and engaged in mining in the Weaverville area. He is reputed to have had some success and to have acquired interests in several wealthy mines.

In later years Mr. Hobson is more often thought of in connection with the cattle and meat packing business, although he also took a short fling at newspaper work. He apparently cared little for printer's ink, for he tired quickly of the *Ventura Republican* which he had acquired from H. G. McLean, and soon disposed of the paper.

Many of the early homes and buildings of the county were built by Mr. Hobson and readers of the *Quarterly* will often come across his name. Whether it be a brick schoolhouse, adobe or wood frame building, Hobson appears to have had the "know how" to meet the need. Some of the structures that he built are still standing and in use today.

# Ventura's First Printing Presses

COMPILED FROM THE NOTES OF E. M. SHERIDAN

It's a long way between Ventura's first printing press and the wonderful piece of machinery which the *Star* has installed in a large new addition to the office. The first press was brought here in 1871 from Santa Barbara, where an enterprising printer named John Bradley purchased an old Washington hand press and with a few fonts of type, came to this place two years before Ventura became a county. The fact that a new county had been proposed was one reason Mr. Bradley came here to start the *Ventura Weekly Signal*.

He had vision and showed unusual pluck, for there were not a dozen American families in the whole section. The predominating Spanish population could neither speak nor read English and were perfectly content without a newspaper, although it was not long after Bradley's arrival until there were many names on his subscription list.

The early copies of the *Signal* further showed Bradley's enterprise as he put something in the Spanish language in every copy of his paper, as well as printing information in Spanish about subscription rates and the cost of advertising.

When the county was formed, new people began coming in and the limited list of subscribers kept growing. Mr. Bradley was naturally pleased at the outlook for business, but he did not live long enough to see the outcome and what the future really promised. In May, 1873, he died from tuberculosis. His efforts towards starting the new county, however, had not been in vain and Bradley lived long enough to see that fact accomplished. In his work he had been assisted by his wife, a woman of literary attainments and who was invaluable to him as an aid in his labors (1).

The first press, a Washington hand press which had come around the Horn in the fifties and which had seen service on the *Santa Barbara Times*, was hauled to Ventura over the beach along the Rincon in a four horse farm wagon. Mr. and Mrs. Bradley accompanied the load, sitting with the driver on the wide seat at the front of the wagon. It was put into a little adobe on West Main Street, immediately west of the Santa Clara House. Later Mr. Bradley built a two story frame house just south of the kindergarten and printed the *Signal* from there.

With the passing of Mr. Bradley in 1873, the *Signal* was taken over by W. E. Shepherd and John Sheridan (2). Together they conducted the paper into the late seventies.

In 1874 Sheridan, who was the mechanical end of the partnership, conceived the idea of securing a press to take the place of the old Washington, which could run at the speed of several hundred papers





JOHN BRADLEY

an hour by the hardest work at the lever. The *Santa Barbara Times*, from which paper Bradley had secured the old press, had replaced it with a Campbell drum press that was considered to be the very latest and best in the business. The *Times* was almost ready to quit, for business in Santa Barbara was on the down grade with the *Post*, *Times*, *Press*, and *Index* all competing in the limited field. Sheridan saw his chance and with the closing of the *Times*, he went to Santa Barbara and purchased the Campbell for \$400. It was a lot of money for those days, but consider the press—a real piece of rotary machinery which turned out papers without pulling a lever and at the dizzy rate of nearly one thousand an hour.

The Campbell was the talk of the town, in fact a nine-day wonder. The greatest thing in the line of printing machinery which had ever gotten south of San Francisco was now in business in San Buenaventura. Even Los Angeles could boast nothing better, though it had nearly 4000 population at the time. A. B. (Pap) Smith of Hueneme, a leading citizen and later supervisor, agreed to haul the press to Ventura with his large wagon and four stout horses. Sheridan went up with him and helped dismantle the press and load it on the wagon. Like its predecessor, the Washington, the Campbell was hauled down the beach in a journey that took nearly two days and a night (3). The outfit and its precious load spent the night at Hubbard's, half way along the Rincon.

The press was delivered at the Signal office on Main Street, a location having been found on the south side where Alberts' Jewelry is now located. The city water power in those days was pretty good; the reservoir being located on the hill and there were few users. Mr. Sheridan made a big wooden wheel with the buckets attached and an undershot stream of water sent the wheel whizzing. It was the marvel of the town when this power was attached to the press with belts and pulleys and it sent the Campbell along at an astounding rate approaching a thousand an hour (4). It did not take long to run off an edition, which by this time was over three hundred weekly papers.

Shepherd and Sheridan and the whole town were proud of that Campbell and the big water wheel. Strangers were immediately steered toward the place by Mr. Shepherd, who was generally on the street talking politics, religion or crops, when he was not playing chess or looking for an occasional tenderfoot from Iowa, his native state. Shepherd had several reasons for welcoming that huge drum cylinder, the chief one being that Sheridan had kept him busy in other days pulling the tiresome lever of the old Washington hand press (5).

It was quite an enterprising firm, Shepherd and Sheridan, and cut a considerable swath in old newspaper days in Ventura. In 1877, Sheridan retired from the firm and Shepherd conducted the paper alone until 1879 when he sold out to Horace Stevens, Sol Sheridan and E. M. Sheridan. Later Stevens drew out of the combination. It should have been a winning thing with no overhead, all members being printers, writers and poets, but a second paper, the Free-Press, had come to town and Ventura had settled down into a comfortable little Spanish town with little business to divide up between two papers. The savings of overhead expense made small difference in the economy of things.

Sol Sheridan began pining for the outer and bigger world about this time. He thought literature was calling him and that the larger papers of the cities needed him. He drifted to Los Angeles leaving E. M. Sheridan alone with the *Signal* and its water wheel; but in 1885, he too left the *Signal* and went to San Francisco. The paper passed into the hands of H. G. McLean, who had previously published



the *Free Press*. After a short time McLean turned the *Signal* over to W. D. Hobson, who ran it for a short time and changed the name to the *Ventura Republican*.

This is a story of presses and newspapers and the men who worked with them. One of the men who knew the Campbell press well was Juan Pico. Pico learned the trade of pressman in Ventura. He was born here and started his work here as a printer's devil early in life in the eighties. He came to know in his work all about presses and could give in detail the history of every press that ever came into the place. He, of course, knew the old Campbell as a father knows his son. His father was Esteban Pico, cantor and leader of the last Indian choir band of the old Mission church. Juan Pico wrote a short history of the old Campbell press and some of the men associated with it. Juan writes as follows:

"In 1886 W. D. Hobson was running the old Republican in the building which stood immediately east of and now joins the Peirano Store—a frame building. Alex Gandolpho had the Peirano Store at that time. The old Republican was on its last legs when Frank E. Smith and Chas. A. Coderi took it from Hobson and ran it for a time. Coderi soon grew weary of it and withdrew. Smith then combined with the *Free Press*, run by Dr. Bowers, but Smith killed the *Free Press* and called the new paper resulting from the combination "The Vidette." Of course the Republican also passed out. The old Campbell press went into storage in this change.

"The firm of Bowers and Smith lasted but a few months when it dissolved. Smith took the *Vidette* and the Campbell press to a building owned by one Righetti, opposite the old Mission. Later it moved a little further up the Main St. eastward, near the Chaffee building. Dr. Bowers revived the *Free Press*, which had vanished from the scene, from December 1889 (6).

"Smith ran the *Vidette* for a short period when he leased it, along with the Campbell press to Smith Bros., Emory E. and J. W. Smith, who lasted but a short time, when Frank Smith had to take it back. The grass was very short for newspapers in Ventura in those days, and it was not a great while until Smith quit trying. He stored his plant at the Gilbert home on Ventura Avenue. This old house, a mile and a half from this city, still stands, vacant now and in ruins. Smith had married into the Gilbert family. The old Campbell press went into new hands.

"It was sold, loaded on Jim Taylor's trucking wagon sometime in the early nineties and hauled to Hueneme where Otto Gerberding used it in printing the *Weekly Hueneme Herald* and afterwards, Fred Wells used the press to get out the paper there. Some 16 years later I took the press down for Cy Fisk, who removed it to Oxnard, where he ran a paper for a short time; when the press was bought by Chas. Orpin who moved it back to Ventura, setting it up in the old Y.M.C.A.



# VENTURA SIGNAL.

VOL. I. SAN BUENAVENTURA, SANTA BARBARA CO., CAL., SATURDAY, JAN., 6, 1872. NO. 38.

## PROFESSIONAL CARDS.

**R. T. WILLIAMS**  
ATTORNEY & COUNSELOR AT LAW,  
and  
DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

OFFICE on Main Street next  
door to Justice Robinson's Office

**DR. CEPHAS L. BARD,**  
PHYSICIAN AND SURGEON.

OFFICE on Oak Street, near the  
Presbyterian Church.  
Orders left at Chapman's Drug Store  
and will receive prompt attention.

**DR. SHREWSBURY**  
having had 15 years' prac-  
tice, and is the only regular dentist in  
town. Office  
Room No. 3 Apothecaries' Hall, to  
Two Doors above the Post  
Office, 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> Stairs.

N. B. The Doctor is a Regularly Li-  
censed Dentist in all kinds of Robber  
Work.

**HOTELS AND SALOONS.**  
**R. C. PEARSON,** E. M. JONES,  
**SANTA CLARA HOUSE**

San Buenaventura, Cal.,  
*This House is managed by up-  
to-date men, and the service being  
old Hotel Keepers, under it specially  
that their Tables be always well sup-  
plied with the DELICACIES of the Sea-  
son.*  
It is the Stage House of the Coast  
Line of Stages. Charges moderate.

**MISSION HOTEL,**  
(Cor. Main & Pizarro Sts.)  
**San Buenaventura Cal'a.**  
W. M. AYERS, Proprietor.

**THIS HOTEL** is kept in first  
class style and is doing a good  
business. It charges to suit the times,  
and is a desirable place to stop. The  
market affords the bar well supplied  
with the best wines, liquors and cigars.  
Thankful for past patronage, the pro-

**J. L. PECK,** J. C. COLWELL

**Ventura Livery**



**SALE & FEED STABLE**

Main Street, opposite Spear's Block  
San Buenaventura.

**WE TAKE** this method of in-  
forming everybody in general,  
and the people of this town in particu-  
lar, that we keep

**A First Class Stable**

Written for the SIGNAL.  
**THE NEW YEAR.**  
BY EROS.

Clothed in garments of snow, with  
frozen tears upon

Her bare and leaden bosom, and wait-  
ing winds in her tossing hair,  
She cometh *not to us*—the beautiful New  
Year.

Lift up your heads, O ye dim-visioned,  
and  
Behold her coming to the music of  
laughing waters,  
With orange blossoms upon her brow,  
and the fragrance

Of the olive and the pomegranate in  
her skirts of trailing green;  
In one hand she bears the budding  
Promises of Spring, and in the other  
the garnered fitness

Of plentiful Summer. With face up-  
lifted and out-  
stretched arm, sweeping the glorious  
panorama of mountain

And valley, islands and sea; in voice  
sweet as the wind.

Mrs. Egbert, take a look into their fi-  
acre garden and see what a man can  
here who has a little pluck, intelligence  
and industry. Mr. E. was born a  
raised at Ethaca, N. Y.; but has so  
many parts of his continent and other  
He thinks this the place of all the wo-  
to live and make a home. He has o-  
been here two years, and with his o-  
hands has made his little "ranch," w-  
you now see it. Here is an acre of i-  
finest strawberries, that bear alone  
if not quite continuously. There is  
long lived Laxton blackberries, for  
which you will be permitted to pick  
few this Christmas day; as fine, ha-  
tious as you ever saw. The raspber-  
ries don't seem to have yet become ac-  
climated and are not bearing; but a  
row of two-year-old apple trees ha-  
ve for every 4<sup>th</sup> one bears fruit now  
half grown. The sugar beets seem  
to be all right also, as many of them w-  
weigh from 20 to 40 pounds; and a  
mangle-wartizes from 40 to 80. The  
is a long row of vigorous looking E-  
lish walnuts, of cherries, peaches,

Ventura's first newspaper printed on  
Washington hand press.



building at the corner of Santa Clara and California streets where the Masonic order is to build its new meeting place. I set up the press for Orpin. But Orpin did not stay long, selling to Leon Perez and Dodolpho R. Ballesteros. These conducted a Spanish paper at Oxnard and I took the press down and set it up for these new owners. They conducted their paper there for a time, when they retired, but what became of the old Campbell press I do not know. Wherever it may be it is no doubt still running, for it had every evidence of having come to this world to stay."

#### NOTES

1. C. P. Strickland, a grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Bradley, informs us that Mrs. Bradley often wrote under the pseudonym of "Eros."

2. John Sheridan was an older brother of Sol. and E. M. Sheridan.

3. The Casitas Pass Road was not started until 1877.

4. Sheridan in his notes has overlooked the fact that previous to this time the *Signal* owners were running what is described as, "our Gordon job press" with water power. The quotation is from the *Signal* of June 13, 1874. The first issue of the *Signal* struck from the Campbell was Nov. 21, 1874. See Muir Dawson's "History and Bibliography of Southern California Newspapers, 1851-1876," for further interesting information on the subject.

5. The editor of the *Quarterly* has endeavored to ascertain the final fate of the old Washington press, but without success. J. H. Morrison, Curator at the Pioneer Museum, is of the opinion that it was sent up into Inyo County where it was used to print several newspapers of the mining "boom" towns.

6. Bowers also published the *Ventura Observer* and the *Santa Paula Golden State*. No issue of the latter is known to have survived.

# The Conejo Gold Rush

By J. H. RUSSELL

Of course the history of California is replete with various stories of gold rushes and stampedes, not so much in Southern California as in the north; however, the Conejo had a gold rush all of its own. In fact there were two although one was for buried treasure and was not so much of a rush as a search over a good many years for hidden treasure.

In the days before the automobile, if we saw a rig coming down our way, we could be about sure it was coming to our place—while the road past our place went on into the Potrero, most people came there over another road. My father was very hospitable and anyone coming our way that he got into a conversation with, he generally asked to stay for dinner; never for breakfast as he could not conceive of breakfast after 5:00 A.M.

In the early light he glanced up the road one morning and saw a rig coming and went out to see who was coming and possibly ask him to dinner—but before the rig turned off the road towards our place and had come very far, to his amazement he saw not only one rig turning but what seemed to be dozens of them—carts, buggies, spring wagons, etc. He stood in the road waiting for the procession to reach him. The first man drew up and after greetings said, "We have come to file on gold claims." This amazed my father still more because he knew nothing about any gold ore in our vicinity. Furthermore, his title for the ranch came from a Mexican grant and these titles granted the mineral rights to the owner. At the extreme east end of our place was a mound which at one time had been an adobe house. A ditch carrying water from the Triunfo Creek ran by there. Also there was an old arrastra under a tree nearby. This is what they told him. The Triunfo Canyon was a very pleasant place to camp and many people came there to stay over night or maybe for several weeks. It seems that someone had picked up a rock specimen in the old arrastra and had it assayed and it proved to be wonderfully rich in gold, and they were coming to stake claims before the news spread too far. My father pointed out to them that they could not file without his permission, but some kind of an understanding was reached and they were on their way to what they hoped and probably believed would be their fortunes.

However, nothing in the way of gold was found and the strike fizzled, as many others had before. Many people searched for the mine from which the ore could have come to be ground up by the "raster" as an arrastra was commonly called. I never saw or heard of anyone who had ever seen the ditch with water in it or knew anything about the old adobe or the old "raster." Still it was there and



a rich piece of ore was found in it. Stranger still, about thirty years later a local man interested in mineralogy found a rock which assayed very rich in gold.

There must have been ore somewhere near enough to mine and bring in to be crushed and washed. The only means of transportation would have been pack mules or on the backs of Indians. So who knows maybe Ventura, too, has a lost mine either in the Conejo or possibly Las Ingines Grant.

Treasure was supposed to have been buried by the Mexicans before the battle of Triunfo, which was supposedly fought on the banks of Triunfo Creek and near an old adobe ranch house on our ranch. Inasmuch as the Mexicans reportedly won the battle, I could never understand why there would be any treasure in the ground as the Mexicans, if they ever buried any, would have most certainly dug it up. Be that as it may, the search went on from time to time for forty or fifty years. Even as late as sometime in the 1930's, my young son would come in from the sleeping porch and tell me there was a light in the old adobe. I thought it was his imagination as the result of a pretty heavy diet of westerns; however, one day in riding past the adobe I stopped to take a look and found the fireplace toppled over and a gaping hole where it stood. The plan in the reasoning of whoever did it was that the fireplace was not originally in the building, but had only been built for five or six years.

The old Cutler place, which my father bought, had a house which was used as a stage station and the people who operated it at that time had two small sons. I think this must have been around 1875. One day they noticed that one of these little boys was playing with a coin. They cleaned it and found that it was a Mexican gold coin. While he would tell somewhere near where he found the coin, the only thing definite they could get out of him was that a "squirrel dug it up." He had found it on top of the dirt from a freshly dug squirrel hole. As squirrels in those days were about as thick as flies, it was impossible to locate the exact spot. About forty years later, the brother came back and said he had with him a man with a divining rod who could locate gold; and if he could search for treasure, he would give us half of what he found. He said he had a general idea of where his brother had as a small child found the Mexican coin. I never did get any buried treasure, but from time to time we would find holes dug in the vicinity of the old adobe, but we never heard of anyone getting the buried treasure.

*Editor's Note:* In the mid-1920's a Spanish silver coin was found in the Briggs region and started a similar buried treasure rumor. At the time of the St. Francis Dam Flood in 1928 considerable soil was washed from the spot and an Indian rancheria site exposed. Later, another Spanish coin was found on the same location. Both were minted around 1812. The inference in this particular case would seem to be that the Indians had come into the possession of the coins honestly, or otherwise, and left them behind at the time they departed from the site.



# The Pioneer Spirit

Los Angeles, September 5th, 1895

My dear Beth

One of your perfectly delicious pears made my chief breakfast this morning. It was so thoroughly ripe and fresh, and perfumed, that it was a real pleasure to take in the juicy juices. You were very good to remember me so agreeably. I have a good many country-bones in my body and know the difference between fresh fruit and wagon-fruit though we get really good wagon things from white farmers who bring their own fresh things, but what is gathered by a nice little girl from her own trees has a different flavor.

Your magazine gets to you regularly I hope? One has just come and we sent it off today for Monday (the 7th) we go to Long Beach to stay into October.

I just love the sea—but we hardly ever do just what we prefer—rather what we “must.” Must is a great word and near kin to Duty, which is the key word of our English speaking people. You know there are some words that are very rich in long-gathered, accumulated honored meanings, “Home”, “Mother”, “Country”, “Right”, “Justice”, “Truth”, “Must and Duty”. These are words to live by and to die for if needed.

I have lots of things yet to do and letters to answer but I would not fail to send thank you to you for the basket of fruit. Tell your brother that our Jack is going through his examinations at Annapolis where, if he succeeds he will be a cadet (sic).

But we will not know until the middle of the month. Patience is another noble governing word—pretty hard to live up to sometimes, but it would never do if we each fretted along over our bothers, but Silence (another good word) and Work (another helping word and fact), and Time which is vast in its far reaching meanings and uses, carry one on through everything. And Hope is a splendid crutch (words are like pictures when you come to know and understand them in a large way). We have reason to Hope for Jack, and he is a dear manly upright fine boy. And a wise man told me when I was young and not patient, “Never poison to-day with tomorrow.” That is good for you to remember for you too are a go-ahead, in earnest, little eager thing. Make the most of the good, and bear like a good woman the trying, in all the hope and silence and patience you can. And be sure these qualities grow with use—and so you will always keep the affection and be a loving help to your people and friends. And be sure Love, is like Home, a growing power and sure refuge.

from your affectionate friend,  
JESSIE BENTON FRÉMONT



From your affectionate friend  
John C. Benton Fremont

Los Angeles, September 5<sup>th</sup> 1895.  
My dear Beth  
(one 22) Your perfectly  
delicious news made my  
chief breakfast this morning.  
It was so thoroughly ripe  
and fresh and perfumed  
that it was a real pleasure  
to take in the juicy  
pieces. You were very good  
to remember me so  
agreeably. Here a good  
many of country - bones in  
my body and I know the  
difference between fresh  
fruit and wagon - fruit.  
Though we get really good  
wagon things from white  
farmers who bring in  
their own fresh things,  
but what is gathered  
by a nice little girl  
from her own trees  
has a different flavor.  
Your magazine gets  
to you regularly I hope.

First page of Mrs. Fremont's letter,  
written on mourning stationery.

# The Narrative of Jefferson Crane

*As Told to E. M. Sheridan in 1921*

## PART II

With the Spanish people the 29th of September (1862) was San Miguel Day, and it was customary to celebrate it for several days with horse-racing, bull-fights and cock-fighting, and dancing in the evenings.

We were living in what was known as "the big field," which included all the land between the Harmon barranca and the one west of it, from the river to the stage road between Ventura and Saticoy, which then ran nearer the stage road than does the present highway. Our house was near where the Cannon—Saticoy road branches from the state highway.

On Saturday afternoons we always went to Uncle Briggs' house to visit over Sunday. When leaving the house thus I always took my double-barreled shotgun with me. Not as a thing of defense, for we then felt no more need of it than in the present days. One thing was that it might not be stolen in our absence, but most of all it was our chief reliance for our meat in those days of great abundance of game.

We started through the field for the gate on the stage road. On arriving there we saw three Indians on the road some distance to the west of us. Two of these were on horseback and one afoot. The man on foot was apparently trying to mount behind one of the riders, but was making poor progress in his attempts. It was quite evident from his actions that he had been partaking of wine or some other alcoholic drink. We drove ahead and out into the road on our way to uncle's place.

After going some distance wife looked back and said one of the Indians was coming towards us alone. I told her it was all right, to let him come, he would do no harm. Again she looked back and stated he was near and approaching rapidly. Almost immediately he rode up beside us on his horse and reaching over grabbed my wife by the arm and attempted to pull her off the wagon-seat and on to his horse. His first attempt failed and he made another grab for her, when I struck his horse with my whip and caused the animal to shy away. He found he was not able to get his horse near the wagon and shouted, "Give me the senorita, and I will go."

I was fully aroused at his evil intentions by now and he saw it and becoming angered he made several attempts to ride his horse alongside our wagon and to reach my wife. My whip was too busy cutting at him and his horse. I looked for my gun and regretted that I had inadvertently left it at the house. When the Indian found he could not get his horse near enough to the wagon for his purposes he rode forward against my team and succeeded in crowding them against a fence.



It was not possible to go further and I got down from the wagon to better defend ourselves against him, looking for a stone at the same time, as I could throw very straight in those days, but no rock was near. A hundred feet further on I knew there was a little wash where rocks were plenty, but under the circumstances it would have been just as available for my purposes as though a hundred miles away. I had to turn all my attention to the Indian, who immediately attempted to ride me down, shouting he would kill me. But I made good use of my whip. It was not long until I was relieved to see the fellow ride away and leave us alone. He rode on forward, entering the Harmon barranca.

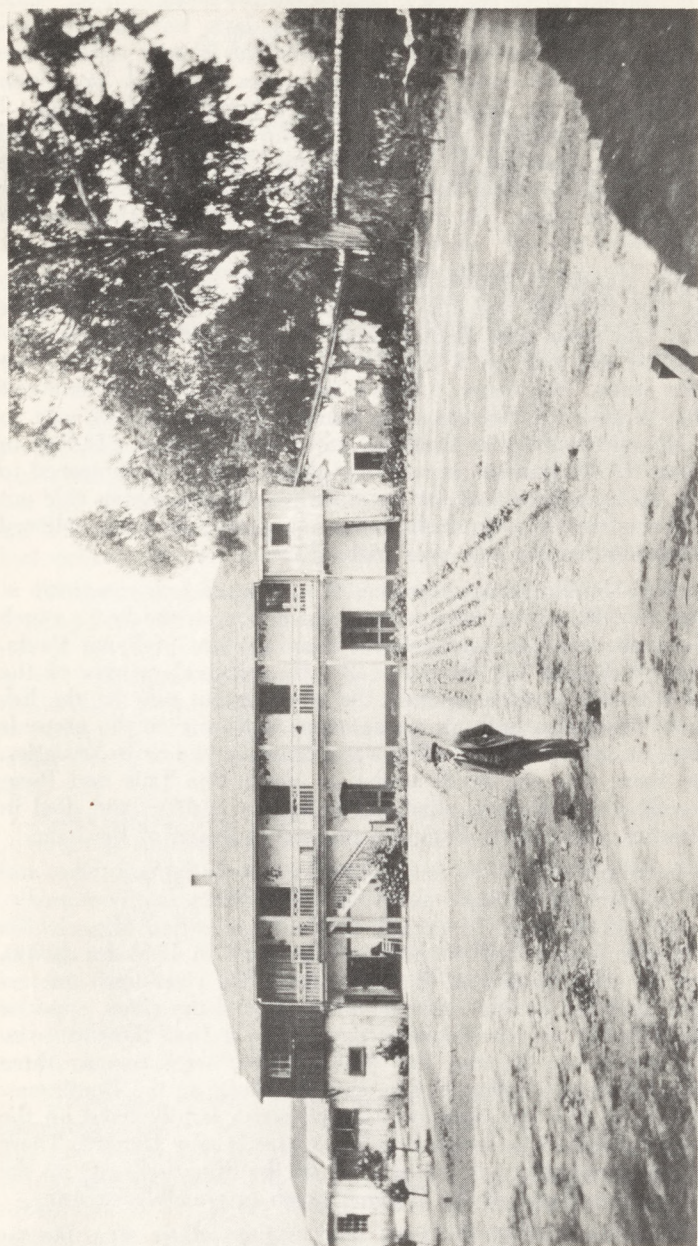
My wife wanted to return home, but I told her there were two Indians in that direction and only one ahead. Also, I recalled the little wash ahead and knew that there I could load up with stones for defense. And we did take on a good load of suitable stones when we reached the wash. We drove forward then and a little beyond met an old-time pioneer of the name of James Palmtree, on his way to Ventura. He said he had no firearms, and he had seen the Indian in the barranca. I told him we were going ahead, and he volunteered to go with us. As we approached the barranca we saw the Indian ride out of it and across the fields towards Saticoy, and we felt much relieved to think that our trouble was over with (1).

Old adobe buildings were scarce, the ruins of one remained at Santa Paula in 1861. Also there was an old adobe on the Sespe ranch just east and south of the school house standing east of Santa Paula. This was the home of the Carrillos (2), the original owners of the Sespe. In 1860 W. D. Hobson built the adobe house now on the Edwards ranch. (He) also built an adobe about that time on the grounds of the Sespe Lemon Company. This was burned in the early seventies. At Saticoy there was one small adobe in which Don Luis and Pamposa, his wife, lived. He was chief of the Saticoy Indians and died in the early sixties, after which Pamposa reigned as queen of the tribe.

There were not more than ten Indians known as Saticoy tribe, and these were all gone in the early seventies. The Olivas family were living in the old adobe on the riverbank on the Rancho San Miguel (3). Dixie Thompson bought half interest in this ranch in 1863 for \$2500. There were no other houses on the west side of the river until one arrived at the Camulos Rancho. On the south side of the river, opposite the Saticoy of today was the house of the family of Juan Sanchez, who had been granted the Rancho Del Norte. There were two or three houses at the place now called El Rio, and the adobe on the Dominguez ranch between El Rio and Saticoy. The Gonzales family lived on the Colonia ranch, their adobe home standing where is now Oxnard. There was one adobe at what is now Somis, one on the Simi (4), one on the Camarillo ranch and one on the Broome ranch or Guadalaska (sic).

The above constitutes all there was in the valley. San Buenaventura was what might be called a "stringtown." All the houses were of adobe and on the Main street from the Catholic church to the Ven-





Olivas Adobe before extensive restoration.  
(E. M. Sheridan in foreground)

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tura river. There were no buildings south to the ocean and none east of the church except three or four adobes adjoining the church and these were partly in ruins.

Chaffee & Robbins were the first American merchants to do business in San Buenaventura (5). They began business in the Spring of 1862, in a room on the south side of Main street and a few doors west of the church. Later the firm changed to Chaffee & Gilbert and had the first building to the east and adjoining the church repaired and moved stock in. Later it became the firm of Chaffee, Gilbert and Bonestal, the firm which erected the present brick building at the southeast corner of Main and Palm Sts.

When we arrived in the county we found all the ranches heavily stocked and meat production was far in excess of consumption and cattle were very cheap. Some San Francisco parties erected a matanza in Montecito to kill for hides and tallow. It was located on the beach just east of Miramar. Here they killed many thousands in the year 1863. As this year was a short grass season cattle were too poor to make the matanza profitable and when the drought of 1864 set in work was abandoned and the drought itself was left to do the killing, and it did a thorough job. This wholesale loss of stock put the landowners in a bad way and many had to sell their lands as they could.

In 1862-63 this section of California was visited by a celebrated geologist by the name of Silliman who came to investigate oil indications in the state (6). After his investigations he returned east and gave a glowing report of the oil outlook in this section. The result was the organization of a Philadelphia Oil Company, with Thomas A. Scott (7) as its president. In winter of 1863-64 they made Charles E. Hughes of Santa Barbara their purchasing agent, and he bought for the company the Ojai, Canyada Larga, Simi, Las Posas and what is now the Newhall ranch, and the interests of most of the heirs of the Colonia ranches. They then purchased an abundant supply of all known oil machinery for prosecuting the oil business and shipped it around Cape Horn (8). The ship arrived here in 1865. It was their intent to make Hueneme their business point, so the ship was instructed to unload there. At that time there was nothing there but sand dunes. They tried many days to land their cargo, losing one of the boilers, then they gave it up and came to Ventura to unload.

Dr. Letterman was sent out as superintendent and J. B. Short as assistant. Experienced drillers and laborers were secured. They began their first operations on the Newhall ranch about two miles above Camulos ranch house. Here they operated about two years and never obtained a sign of oil, when they abandoned work. Dr. Letterman went to San Francisco and later was elected Mayor (9). J. B. Short went to Los Angeles where for years he did much for Southern California development. Other oil development was undertaken at No. 1, also in the Upper Ojai, but no oil of commercial quantity was obtained. T. R. Bard was sent out in 1865 and given full charge of the interests of the oil company.

There was oil development by others in a small way, by A. M. Wheeler in Wheeler Canyon, hence the name of the canyon; Governor Stanford in Saltmarsh Canyon; an Englishman had charge of the work there; his wife claimed to have been one of the Maids of Honor in the court of Queen Victoria. We called on them and she showed many dresses of silk and satins she had worn on great occasions. She had two dogs that she dressed in dainty robes and ribbons. Later on J. B. Saltmarsh had charge for years and this gave the name to the canyon. I believe the Adams well in Adams canyon was the first one in the county to produce oil in commercial quantities. George S. Gilbert was the first man to attempt oil refining in the state. He bought a horse-power well-drilling outfit and brought it to the valley and tried to develop oil in Santa Paula canyon. His attempts at both refining and development were practically unsuccessful.

#### *The End*

#### NOTES

1. This portion of the Crane Narrative is embodied in a separate manuscript at the Pioneer Museum.

2. The Carrillo home was in Santa Barbara and it is doubtful if the adobe mentioned here was used by the family except on rare occasions. (See *A Place Called Sespe* by Robert Glass Clelland.)

3. This well known adobe is still standing.

4. The adobe referred to here as being on the Simi is probably the one still standing on the Strathern ranch and reputedly built by the De la Guerras.

5. Actually, a man named Streeter opened the first store in Ventura about 1848. The date may have been earlier, as Streeter was sent here by Col. Stevenson to take over Mission property from Arnaz. His "store" was more saloon than anything else.

6. Silliman investigated mining possibilities also, and published a small booklet on the area east and north of present day Newhall.

7. Thomas Scott was President of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

8. Actually shipped via the Isthmus of Panama.

9. Letterman Hospital in San Francisco is named for this man.



# The County Histories

BY CHAS. F. OUTLAND

With the exception of the Thompson and West *History of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties*, which was noted in the first issue of the Quarterly, the works listed here complete that class of books known as "write-up" or "mug" histories pertaining to Ventura County. Their primary value lies in the abundance of biographical material which they contain, although even in this respect a word of caution is in order. While the vital statistics may be regarded as accurate, the sometimes grandiloquent biographical sketches may often be taken with a grain or two of salt. Such words of praise as "high civic ideas," "esteemed by his fellow man," "a man of sterling qualities," "distinctive initiative powers" and "high personal character" were bestowed lavishly and impartially upon preacher and horse-thief alike.

Books of this type are readily available at most libraries.

*A Memorial and Biographical History of the Counties of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura, California.* By Yda Addis Storke. Chicago, 1891.

Some copies may bear the erroneous publication date of 1871.

*Historical and Biographical Record of Southern California; etc.* By J. M. Guinn, A. M. Chicago 1902.

A similar work was published by the same author in 1907, 2 vols. Guinn adds little to the previously published histories concerning Ventura County.

*Historical Atlas of Ventura County.* By W. E. Alexander, comp. and pub. (1914).

Strictly speaking this is not a "mug" history. The bulk of the book is composed of large scale school district maps of the county and designates the owners of each land parcel.

*History of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties, California.* By C. M. Gidney, Benjamin Brooks and Edwin M. Sheridan. Chicago, 1917, 2 vols.

Sheridan, who wrote the Ventura County portion of the book, gathered a considerable amount of his material from the Thompson and West of 1883. Little attempt seems to have been made to utilize the mass of information gathered by Bancroft and Hittell.

*History of Ventura County, California.* By Sol N. Sheridan. Chicago, 1926. 2 vols.

The historical volume is as good as any for works of this kind, but the volume of biography is positively "sticky."

*History of Ventura County, State of California; Its People and Its Resources.* By Elizabeth Kreisher Ritter. Edwin M. Sheridan, editor emeritus, Mary Jane Windsor, biographical editor, 1940.

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***The***  
VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
***QUARTERLY***



**ADOLFO CAMARILLO**

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# ***The Ventura County Historical Society***

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# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

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## DON ADOLFO CAMARILLO

Near the close of the great Franciscan Mission era a young colonist arrived in Alta California from Mexico to enter into the trading and merchandising business. His name was Juan Camarillo. Today, one hundred and twenty-two years later, the Ventura County Historical Society is proud to have for its Honorary Life President Juan Camarillo's son, Adolfo.

It seems almost incredible that in the combined life span of father and son so vast an amount of the history of Ventura County and also of California, should have transpired—the last of the Mission era; the days of the ranchos, or as Gertrude Atherton has so well expressed it, "The Splendid Idle Forties;" the transition from Mexican to American rule; the gold rush; the great drought of the early 1860's with its consequent breaking up of the large ranchos; and the early migration of American homeseekers who, with the help of their sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters, were to build the agricultural, industrial, social and spiritual Ventura County that we know today.

The oxen and carreta are gone; the one room schoolhouse has been replaced by fine modern buildings. Church services held under the pepper trees are now conducted in magnificent edifices of brick and stone. A courthouse once called the finest west of the Mississippi, houses a county government that did not exist when our Honorary President was born. One of the names on the cornerstone of that courthouse is Adolfo Camarillo, symbolical of the part he has played in the growth and history of the county.

To the citizens of Ventura County, however, Adolfo Camarillo represents far more than a mere link with a glorious past. Don Adolfo is synonymous with the finest in the Spanish Californian rancheros of an earlier day, and in him is found the charm, generosity and hospitality of the colorful days of the rancheros.

*Don Adolfo, sus multiples amigos y admiradores, agradecidos por todo lo que Vd. ha hecho en beneficio colectivo, lo saludan con todo afecto y cariño.*

# A ROLL OVER THE RANCHOS

Reprinted from the *Alta California*, September 16, 1868

San Buenaventura, August 30th, 1868

Editors *Alta*

Just as I was leaving the town of Santa Barbara, Mr. Thomas R. Bard, Superintendent of the Philadelphia and California Petroleum Company and agent for other Eastern capitalists, also a supervisor of the county, persuaded me to halt in this place a day or two for his return, when he would show me around in the vicinity, I did so, and have seen an agricultural country of much larger extent and far more fertile than I had previously imagine(d).

I first went to the headquarters of the agency upon the Ojai Rancho, up the San Buenaventura River, seven miles distant, and near the junction of it and the San Antonio. I here met Mr. John P. Green, President of these land and oil companies, who has been recently sent out by them to divide up and make sale of their arable lands. In company with Superintendent Bard and Messrs. Church, of San Francisco, and Vontriegar, of this place (asphaltum operators,) I traveled up the San Antonio some fifteen miles to view the country and examine the oil springs and beds of asphaltum. These are very numerous hereabout, a considerable oozing out of the oil observable in several, which spreads over the ground and evaporates the volatile portion. The large beds, banks and mounds of asphaltum all around attest the fact of great quantities having boiled up from the reservoirs or generating sources beneath. There are some three hundred of these springs, or exudation places, upon the lands belonging to the various parties mentioned. Large sums of money (some three hundred thousand dollars in the whole) have been expended in this section by these Eastern capitalists, and certain other gentlemen in San Francisco (1), to develop this mineral substance, but with little return as yet. Nothing, for some time, has been done in farther prosecution of the enterprise, since the high rates of labor and very low prices of the Pennsylvania oil would not justify it, even though assured of sinking wells that should produce a plentiful supply. But these Companies are about not only reimbursing themselves for the original purchase money of the ranchos and outlay in search of oil by the sale of the much fertile lands included in their investments, but will have a large profit also owing to the rise in value and demand for such land. The oil springs and asphaltum beds will be reserved, as Mr. Bard, and I presume, others of the stockholders, are sanguine of ultimate success in securing a plentiful supply. The existing beds of asphaltum are also of much value.

The Ojai Rancho contains six leagues, one half of which is fine arable land; several thousand acres being of number one quality. It



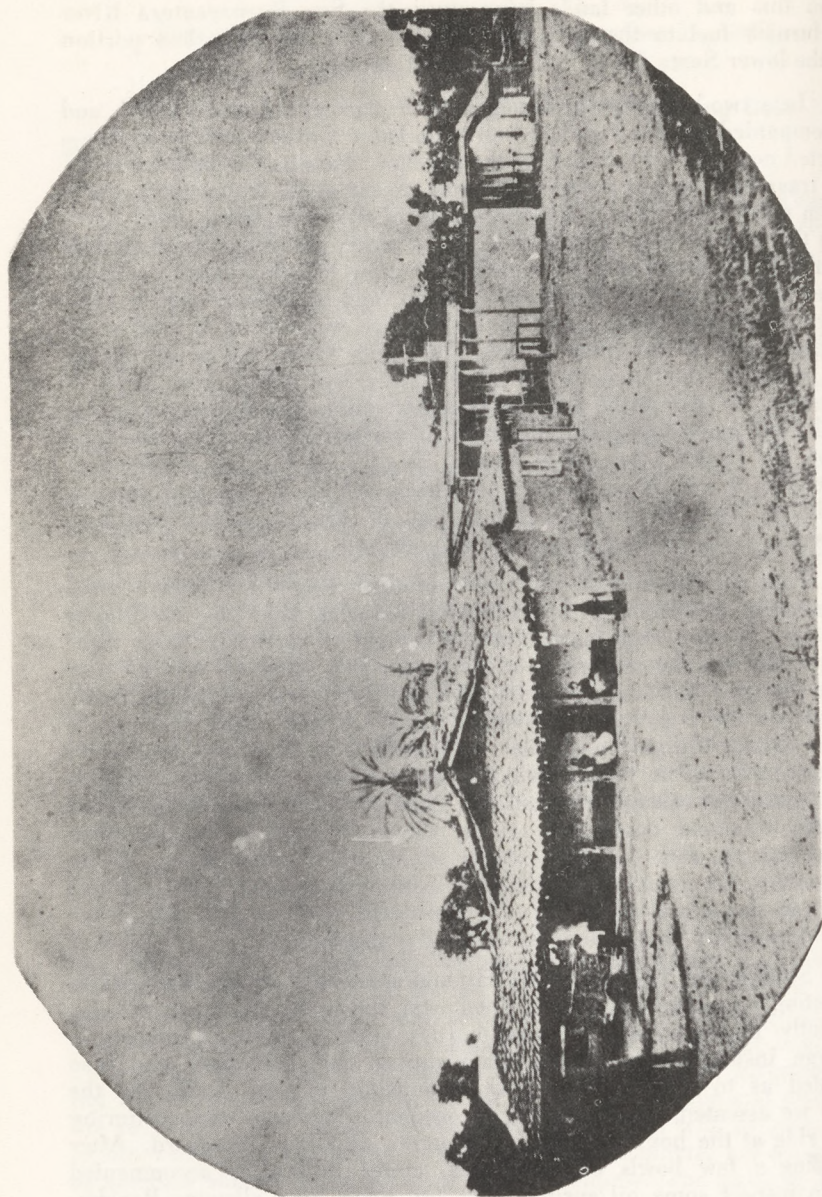
is wooded and watered. To reach the upper plateaus the Superintendent has recently had two excellent roads graded at an expense of twenty-five hundred dollars. A large supply of wood will be drawn from this and other lands lying upon the San Buenaventura River to furnish fuel to the town and settlers upon the timberless portion of the lower Santa Clara Valley and contiguous territory.

In a two-horse Concord wagon, well provisioned and bedded, and accompanied by Bard and Storell—the latter Green's brother-in-law—started next day for a roll over the ranchos. Passing through the town, we travelled along a nearly level and exceedingly rich country, some seven miles from it, to a lower crossing of the river Santa Clara. This, like the San Benito, Salinas, and almost every stream throughout this southern country, has a wide, sandy, shallow bed, low banks, with no holes nor deep places anywhere in them, and all usually dry in summer. There was some water flowing where we crossed it, and quite a large body a few miles above. The Santa Clara ranks among the big rivers of the State in the winter, since it drains a large area of country. Ascending the right bank a few miles, found the low bottom to the left moist and good for crops of various kinds, whilst the land upon the right (a league in extent) is of a sandy, dry description, covered with cactus and wormwood, but good for grapes and possibly grain. At Santa Barbara the cactus region commences, which prickly nuisance grows as well upon rich as poor soil.

Leaving the river bottom we continued some four or five miles more over the Santa Clara del Norte Rancho, belonging to Signor Schappa Pietra (sic), an Italian. The major portion of this three and a half league rancho is a rich and level body of land. A rise of a few feet took us on to the Rancho Los Posas, a splendid body, mostly of level and gently sloping land, through which passes the Simi Creek. Camped near the stage station, twenty miles from San Buenaventura—but twenty-five by the road we came (2). Had a glorious night's sleep on top of the Company's hay-rick, out of reach of the fleas and other annoyances, except one cat. A bright moon shone on my face the most of the night, but if, as is asserted, my features were distorted and health injured thereby I have not yet been made aware of it. I was considered as good-looking in the morning by my companions as on the day previous.

Second day, travelled southerly and seawardly some twenty miles, counting divergements, and camped near the house of Senor Abadie, recently murdered by a paisano (3). The hospitable hombre in charge insisted upon cooking our supper and breakfast, and also wanted us to sleep in the house, promising us good beds. To the first we assented, but preferred an outdoor chamber. Stopped during our ride at the house of Signor Bernardo, an Italian shepherd. After quaffing a few bowls of his French claret, he kindly accompanied us to inspect some oil springs near by, upon the Calleguas Rancho. These springs have, apparently, the best showing for oil of any yet seen. From these, went to the house of Senor Gabriel Ruez, who





Corner of Main and Figueroa Streets, Ventura, 1864.



has a small vineyard and some strong but fair-tasting wine made from it.

Third day journeyed southwesterly ten miles, and struck the sea; thence fifteen more northerly to near the mouth of the Santa Clara, and up the lower bottom of that stream to camping ground in the enclosure of Mr. Pierpont. The route all the way lay over the Colonia—an eleven league grant—nearly the whole of which is an unbroken level; in fact, mostly too level, but of exceeding richness the major portion. The traveling for more than half the distance was heavy upon the horses, owing to the undermining of the ground by the many gophers, squirrels, mice, badgers and some other vermin, and the heavy growth of last year's mustard and malva. Strange, not a stalk of these are growing this year over all this extensive section. No spring, nor running water throughout the day's drive, nor any trees until reaching the vicinity of the Santa Clara, where a considerable body of willow, cotton-wood and some sycamore is growing. In a few weeks this rancho and Las Posas will be offered for sale at from \$6 to \$10 per acre.

Pierpont only made a start last fall upon a small tract (twenty two acres) of the lower valley land, but with such success as to highly elate him. His nursery of orange, lemon, almond, walnut, pomegranate and some other fruits and nuts looked very thrifty; his potatoes, onions, and corn are of prime yield, both as to quantity and quality; but his brag production is a four acre lot of hops. Obtaining the roots in February, nearly all appearing to be dead when set out, and cold, wet and backward spring sprouting them very late, he did not expect a hop to mature, so neglected to stake them; but the plants suddenly grew up, spread out its long wiry branches, and never, in any land, has hopvine been so loaded. "The quality, likewise," says Pierpont—experienced in the business at the East—"is equal to any the world can produce."

Fourth day, kept up the right bank until opposite the extensive orchard of Mr. Briggs, of Marysville horticultural fame. Briggs purchased a few years ago the fertile and finely located rancho of Santa Paula at Saticoy (sic) containing some 18,000 acres, and extending from near the town of San Buenaventura several miles up the Santa Clara River.

The orchard contains 200 acres, trees looking thrifty, notwithstanding the neglect to properly cultivate this season. But the richness of the rancho and present rise in agricultural lands, has, as the case with the oil men mentioned, put some money into his pocket, as well as quite a fortune into that of Mr. G. B. Higgins, in whose hands the property was placed for sale at a certain aggregate amount, he to have all the overplus. The orchard is ten miles from town (4).

Returning thither, stopped at Saticoy to look at the flowing well. This is of genuine Artesian character, the water rushing up with great force whilst digging a common well some weeks ago, and after reach-



ing only eighteen feet in depth. It is cool, well-tasted, and pours out a stream large enough to turn a small overshot wheel. A large area of this most excellent arable land upon the various ranchos hereabout has been objected to by all, and rejected by numbers seeking homes, because of the lack of timber and water. But although some wells sunk have produced no water at the usual depth, and others have struck bad water, yet this Saticoy artesian and several ordinary wells of only a few feet down have given water as good as could be desired; whilst a sufficiency of firewood is to be found in this section for several years supply, by which time cultivated forests can be reared, since the soil and climate mature several varieties of such trees most rapidly, as has been tested. Moreover, the mild temperature necessitates but a small quantity of fuel.

The most of the soil in all these valleys and table lands is of a sand-loam nature, peculiar to this section. It resembles old ashes cemented by water, and breaks up as easily. Where no weed roots obstruct, or even then, if not too large and thick, the virgin soil may be broken up dry with a span of horses. I have never seen earth so easy of cultivation. With the exception of wheat, which is a very uncertain crop, owing to its liability to become rusted, these rich southern lands yield most productions better than those north. The soil is generally deeper and stronger. In addition to the grape and other temperate zone as well as semi-tropical fruits and nuts, which latter flourish well south of the Santa Inez Mountain, here is the country, par excellence, for corn. No where in the valley of the Mississippi can a larger quantity be raised to the acre, and I question if as much. This corn region commences so soon as the mountain mentioned above is passed. I was in a field on an upper valley of the Ojai Rancho, where many of the ears were ten feet from the ground, and they, as well as the stalks, appeared to be of proportionate dimensions. Two crops can be raised in certain localities the same season from the same ground. Some raise a crop of corn after cutting off barley hay. Barley is a sure crop and yields largely. The sweet potato is better than up north, and some Irish potatoes raised this year, near town, looked and tasted as well as the best Pajaro, Bodega and Humboldt spuds. The sugar cane, I am certain, will be successfully cultivated here in a few years.

Notwithstanding the richness of the soil, large sections of these plain lands cannot, without much loss and hardship, be settled upon by the small and poor cultivators, if acting independently. I would suggest to them the cooperative system. Let a number select some favorable locality for a village settlement, where an abundance of good water is at hand, and wood sufficiently accessible, and then unite in a general enclosure, or in keeping guard over their fields if not fenced. Also their joint efforts will be needed to kill off the destructive vermin. A sort of labor community in other respects may be discovered to be mutually beneficial.

Never in all my wanderings have I seen such prodigious num-



bers of small game. Rabbits, hares, quails, ground squirrels, and other birds and animals are to be counted by thousands. They swarm on the land in many localities, and are so plentiful and tame that a sportsman soon loses his zest for hunting and abandons the slaughter in disgust. A man without legs can do splendid shooting here, since a ride of an hour or two in a buggy will enable him to bring down as much game from his seat as will load the vehicle. We might have killed hundreds of hare and quail from our wagon had we been in the game marketing line. As it was, there were numbers shot we could not eat nor give away. I killed two rabbits at one fire, and three at another. The last shot I only saw one but when I went to pick it up from the side of a bush, found two others kicking their death throes alongside; killed a couple of "road runners" (very numerous here), and found them quite good eating. The farmers and gardeners are compelled to kill off the quails and rabbits, as well as the squirrels and gophers, with poison. In fact, the two former are much the more destructive near the river. Pierpont says he counts from fifteen to thirty rabbits dead in his small holding every morning from the effects of the veneno put out by him. I inquired whether it was not a bother to hunt up and bury or carry off the carcasses to prevent a stench; he said no, because the buzzards performed this scavenger business. These birds, I presume, are strychnine and phosphorus proof; saw five antelope upon the great plain. Bard got within shooting distance of one, but his pistol missed fired (5).

San Buenaventura is a small, rusty, dusty little village of the old California type, with indications of soon becoming Americanized (6). It contains some five hundred inhabitants, the major portion being of the Hispano-Indian stock. Has four stores and some six or eight rum shops and restaurants. Mission Hotel is well kept by Mr. Ayres—the cleverest landlord I have met upon the route. His son-in-law, Pierson, has fitted up the adjoining bar and billiard saloon quite in city style. A proof of the prosperity of the place, another story is to be added to the hotel this fall.

This town is bound to become a place of importance soon, as it has a rich and extensive back country to build it up. There are some 300,000 acres of fine arable land which must be tributary, and it will also aspire to divide with Los Angeles the traffic flowing to and from the country drained by the upper waters of the Santa Clara River. The anchorage and landing are said to be as good as at Santa Barbara.

I have a bill of damages against the town, to be paid out of the first cash received into their port fund. Bathing at the beach the evening before leaving, a rather heavy breaker, which I attempted to dive under, whirled me over and sent me rolling and triturating among the pebbles. Considerable skin was taken off, besides receiving several bruises. They said I did not understand surfing it; perhaps not so well as a porpoise, sea lion or surf boat.

In the Mission Orchard are three of the same oriental and

Scripture-famed trees as the one described in my San Luis letter. In the latter place I was informed it was a date tree, but here it is called a palm. They are about thirty feet in height and much took my fancy, not only because of the historical and religious associations connected with them, but from the unique and peculiar appearance of the trees.

The citizens of this section intend applying to the next Legislature to set them off a new county; the upper, or division line, separating them from Santa Barbara to extend from El Rincon northerly to the summit of the Diablo Range. They will also ask to have a portion of Los Angeles County, lying east, to be included, as belonging to them by right of natural boundries and trade relations.

C. E. P.

#### NOTES

1. The San Franciscan gentlemen were probably Messrs. Stanford, Bishop and Hayward.

2. The stage station referred to was probably the one located near what is now the intersection of Los Angeles and Santa Clara Avenues. When the stage road was re-routed over the Conejo this station was moved to Springville.

3. Abadie, mayordomo of the Guadalupe Rancho, was reputed to have had some \$40,000 in gold which disappeared at the time of his murder. Supposedly buried by his murderer, the money has periodically been an object of search ever since.

4. Now the Orchard Farm of the Edwards.

5. Probably this episode occurred near Round Mountain which was famous for its numerous antelope in early days.

6. Seven years earlier Brewer had described San Buenaventura as, "A little dirty village of a few inhabitants, mostly Indian, but with some Spanish-Mexican and Americans." See *Up and Down California in 1860-1864*.



# THE BURNING OF THE PETROLIA

By E. C. MAY (1)

It was cold as billy texas in Santa Paula, that night in the winter of 1903-04, and I was sleeping peacefully when I heard the thin scream which has brought terror to the hearts of men since time began; "F-I-R-E!"

I thought I was dreaming but the cry came again with unmistakable terror. I sprang out of bed and ran to the window and looking toward my place, three blocks away, I saw the whole town lighted up. Dressing hurriedly, I raced to the main street two blocks away and it seemed to me that my whole business establishment was in flames. I was operating the Goldstone, a two story brick structure with two stores and a restaurant on the ground floor and a hotel on the second floor (2).

The fire had started in a saloon, two doors west of the Goldstone. A Mexican boy had been thrown out of the place and he stood on the sidewalk and fired into the ceiling of an overhanging porch and ran down the street. It was believed that he came back in the early hours of the morning and set the place on fire.

A strong east wind was driving the flames away from my place but it was evident that all the buildings to the west were doomed. They were of wood and under the pressure of the dry East wind, the fire jumped from house to house and was now completely out of control; and the facilities for fighting it were of little use.

The old Petrolia Hotel was a block away, and strenuous efforts were made to save it but it could not be done, and near daylight it caught and was soon a mass of flames. Two drunks were arguing about the casualties, one saying many tenants were still in the building, but it developed that they were bed bugs. The other insisted there was not a single bed bug in that hotel. He knew, because he lived there. They were all married and had families. When the sun rose over the mountain, every building west of the Goldstone was a mass of smoldering ruin.

As I remember them, the stores east of the Goldstone were first; Morris Cohen's general drygoods store, which had been there a long time. There were bullet holes in the walls and a story was current that two Americans had fought it out in the street with pistols in the earlier days and one had been killed. Several bullets came into the store and just missed Mr. Cohen. He had a son-in-law named Feeder. He closed this store and moved away soon after I came.

Then came Stewart's shoe store; Puckett's grocery store; a saloon; Lee's candy store; Ike Brown's general supply store, and the bank on



**Main Street, Santa Paula after the Petrolia Fire. The two-story building on the right is the Goldstone.**

the corner. A tall handsome brunette worked for Ike Brown. Later she married George Farrand, the Clerk of the Superior Court and they moved to Los Angeles, where he became a prominent lawyer. I bargained to buy Ike Brown's store, but the deal did not go through. Across the street, same side and still going east were Say Bros's Star Store; Corbett's Furniture Store and some other small establishments.

Across the street from the Goldstone were King's Furniture Store; Cauch's Drug Store; Crowell's big general store; Page's bicycles and a tailor shop. In the next block, going east, was Davis and Drown's livery stable, and some other structures.

I think Judge Titus' office was on the Crowell side of the street when I came there, but he moved across on my side and between my place and the Petrolia Hotel. I remember an amusing trial in his Court, which came near causing a fight. I had bought a big red mare from Mr. Marshall for a hundred dollars and before I paid for it, Mr. Page, the bicycle man garnished me, claiming Mr. Marshall owed him money and the trial was on. Mrs. Marshall wanted her husband to sock Mr. Page, but he said he would abide by the decision of the jury. Mrs. Marshall began pacing up and down before the judge's bench and finally exclaimed, "Oh, I wish I were a man! OH HOW I WISH I WERE A MAN!" Mr. Marshall still did not say anything, but Mr. Page stroked his black beard and giggled "Heh heh! I kinder sawter wish you wuz myself!" And that ended hostilities. As I remember it, Mr. Marshall collected the money.



That mare was the strangest horse flesh I ever saw. She was fat, sleek and looked like a picture in the stud book, but she was so lazy a sharp cut of the whip got only mild attention. I used her with another horse as a team to deliver goods. I had a piano in the store and at closing time one of the girls would often play. One afternoon the team was standing in front of the store when a girl struck up a lively tune and that old mare went crazy and tried to run away. She lunged forward, dragging her team mate, and the driver had trouble controlling her until I told the girl to stop playing. Instantly, that old mare subsided, hung her head and looked like she was too lazy to breathe. After that, we often put on a show for the town at closing time. When the piano started up she would be standing with hanging head as usual, but at the first cord she would rear up and try to run away.

I know, of course, that the space in this small magazine is limited, but the California stories I have to tell seem not to be. Many of the more serious stories are in my books, *Gators*, *Skeeters and Malarly*, and *From Dawn To Sunset* (3). I have many pleasant memories of my stay in Ventura County from 1901 to 1909, and I hope to write about them again some day.

#### NOTES

1. E. C. May states in the introduction to his book *Gators, Skeeters and Malarly* that, "I have been successively, a common laborer, merchant, judge, lawyer, member of the Florida House of Representatives, State Attorney, and again judge of Citrus County until my retirement in 1949." Oldtimers in Ventura County will best remember Judge May as a merchant in Santa Paula, Oxnard and Ventura. May's Emporium is still a well remembered name to many who have forgotten the owner. Judge May's address is 400 Main St., Inverness, Florida for those who may wish to write to him.

2. The present Marion Hotel Building.

3. These books are on sale at County Stationers in Ventura or can be obtained at any time by writing to the author. Price \$3.50 each. All books autographed and postpaid to any address.

# SIMI'S FIRST FARMER

BY JANET CAMERON

Due to its isolation Simi was probably the last large area in Ventura County to be settled by real pioneers. It was not until the 1860's that Americans appeared at all, and then it was not to stay permanently. In 1864 Mr. Thomas Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad sent Thomas R. Bard to Ventura County to look after his oil interests there. In the course of the next few years, as the De la Guerras lost their holdings, Mr. Scott acquired all the 113,000 acres of the Rancho Simi with the exception of the Tapo. The reputed price was sixty-five cents an acre. Mr. Scott and his syndicate were interested only in oil and were willing to rent their land for other purposes. Thus it was that Mr. Charles E. Hoar, who came to the valley in 1871, was able to go into partnership with two men named Bates and Browne (1) and rent about 12,000 acres of the valley for sheep-raising. Bates and Browne took the western end of the area and Mr. Hoar the eastern end. This arrangement lasted until 1883. Then Mr. Hoar took over the whole thing.

Charles was a Harvard University graduate, descendant of a president of that institution and nephew of Senator Hoar of Massachusetts. About 1868 Mr. Hoar graduated with high honors; became engaged to a beautiful girl, Florence Keyes; got a job with an engineering firm which was operating in the northwest, to be gone two years. His future seemed assured but on his return after completing his assignment, he found Florence married to a rival whom he had always disliked. Charles left within a week to reconstruct his life in Southern California and found himself in the Simi Valley.

At first he lived a half mile from the old Taylor house. He boarded with the Taylors, who had arrived about the same time. When this place burned down, he bought out Juan Pucillo who lived in a picturesque little spot known as the Humming Bird's Nest. Juan and his mother stayed on to board Mr. Hoar and to work for him. Later Mr. Hoar built two rooms apart from the adobe to serve as his bedroom and office.

Since Mr. Hoar was interested only in sheep-raising, he was glad to sublet his land to anyone who would raise hay or grain to provide suitable stubble for his sheep during the dry season. Sub-lessees were Evans and Barnett, S. M. W. Easley, Bud and Frank Taylor, the Cornetts, the Saviers and Henry Mahan. Mr. Evans broke the Barnett place and raised the first crop (hay) ever to be raised in the valley. Incidentally, the first white man to die in the valley was killed in this operation when his team ran away and pulled his harrows over him. The next year Mr. Barnett got hold of some barley and



raised the first crop of the grain that was to be the principal product of the area for years.

For some ten years a stage line which connected with the Butterfield lines near Los Angeles was operated through the valley on the run from Santa Barbara to Los Angeles (2). A stage-house was located at the foot of the pass and cared for by a wiry little Irishman called Larry. After 1875 the stage was re-routed through the Conejo. Mr. Hoar and Mr. Brown took turns going over to Conejo every Saturday night for the mail. Mr. Frank Cornett says that Mr. Hoar used to pay him fifty cents for making the 28-mile round trip. However, a basket of fruit, flowers or something of more value than the fifty cents was always left when the mail was taken.

When it became apparent in the early eighties that not enough oil was being produced to satisfy the syndicate, Mr. Scott decided to liquidate his holdings. He so instructed Mr. Bard. Hoar and Browne were given first chance to buy the Simi land for the price of one dollar per acre. This they agreed to do and Mr. Hoar made arrangements in the east to get the money. Then Mr. Browne decided that the risk was too great and withdrew. In 1887 the Simi Land and Water Company was organized and the rancho sub-divided into smaller plots. Mr. Hoar's lease still had two years to run, but the company offered him the rest of The Humming Bird's Nest in return for his relinquishment and the right to put in a two-inch pipe line from the springs on his place to the new hotel the company was building on a knoll just west of it. Mr. Hoar was also given first preference to buy any of the company's land unsold after a certain length of time for sixty dollars per acre. This he did later on and obtained several hundred acres of land west of Erringer Road and south of Royal Avenue.

The water did not hold out but as long as Mr. Hoar lived on the Humming Bird's Nest he always had sufficient water for his fruits and flowers. He had a "look-out" on a high spot on the south side of his place. Here he planted some pepper trees and arranged some comfortable seats. From this vantage point he could see all over the valley with the aid of his powerful binoculars, thus keeping track of his sheep as well as his dogs and herders. Mr. Hoar was a "gentleman farmer."

He went into the bee business and this is the way it happened. One year he had a fellow working for him who was always talking about bees. To please him Mr. Hoar bought some stands from one of his tenants who had an apiary. After a few months, as was the habit with so many of the old-time California laborers, the bee-keeper wanted more excitement and moved on, leaving Mr. Hoar with the bees. Now he knew nothing about bees and cared less for that kind of work. It happened that he was keeping an old man about seventy-five years of age on his payroll just to help him out, and he assigned him to the apiary. When the time came to extract the honey, John Appleton, a young fellow who had arrived a few months previ-





**Mr. Hoar at his sheep camp. Hoar is seated in the cart, Bud and Frank Taylor on the ground, Juan Pucillo cooking.**

ously from Massachusetts, happened along and wanted a job. He was given the task of helping with the honey. The extractor was old and hard to handle, so Mr. Appleton did the turning while Underwood, the old man, brought in the honey. Appleton knew something about bees and it worried him because so much brood and so many eggs were being brought in. He spoke to Underwood about it. "Nonsense!" said the old man. "Bees don't lay eggs." Mr. Hoar, who happened to be standing near by, winked at Mr. Appleton. It was not long before Underwood was given something else to do and Mr. Appleton became beekeeper, much to his liking as he could combine his job with his hobby, ornithology.

In 1883 Mr. Hoar moved down to his property in the valley and began raising hogs. He felt it would be easier to sell hogs than grain. He went into the business in a big way and hired Joe Jacques to look after the animals. After the Southern Pacific Railroad was extended to Chatsworth, the hogs were hauled there in wagons to be shipped to the stockyards in Los Angeles. One time his brother, Mr. Samuel Hoar, attorney for the Boston and Albany Railroad, had business in Los Angeles. Before he went home he came out in his special car to visit his brother. Charles Hoar's men asked him if he thought his brother would hitch a carload of pigs behind his special. Mr. Hoar just smiled.

Simi's first farmer was eccentric in some ways but withal very kindly. He was a philosopher in a way—a hopeful and cheerful philosopher. No matter how dry it was, he was always the last to give up



hope of enough rain to finish the crops. The 1890's were hard, dry years. The settlers were very discouraged, but Mr. Hoar would say to them, "These pull-backs are for some good. Why, in the early days I had an important telegram to send to San Francisco. I also had a fine cow to deliver to San Fernando; so I sent my man with both, telling him to hurry. Well, that cow pulled back and pulled back, and it took the man a day to drag her over the pass and two days to get her to San Fernando. He didn't know what to do, whether to send the telegram so late or not, but he sent it. The delay netted me just five hundred dollars. I say, you can't tell what good these pull-backs will do."

He was a good neighbor. After the colonists came they were always glad to see Old Mose (his favorite horse) coming down the road, for Mr. Hoar would invariably have his buggy filled with vegetables, fruits or flowers for the newcomers. He was a great reader and loved to talk with anyone who would take him seriously. One night it was raining hard and was very dark. There had been no mail for several days on account of washouts. A knock came at the door. "Who could that be on a night like this?" we asked. We opened the door and there was Mr. Hoar dressed in his slicker, rubber hat and boots. He would not come in, but handed father something in a wet gunny sack. "I thought you might be lonesome and so I brought you these books," he said and started walking back home.

Mr. Hoar had one bad habit. Once a year, regularly, he would go to Los Angeles, buy a supply of whiskey and stay drunk until it was gone. At this time when he drove out with Old Mose, his pockets would bulge with bottles which he wanted to share with his friends. He never had an accident at such times either. Old Mose took care of that.

He had told us that upon his death he wanted to be buried on his lookout at the foot of Santa Susana, a rock that in the first rays of morning looked like a beautiful Madonna. His nephews came from Boston, but they knew nothing of his wish so it was not fulfilled.

#### NOTES

(Author's Note.) This information is taken partly from my own recollections, but mostly from an interview with Mr. Hoar in 1909 and from an interview with Bud Taylor in 1928. Mr. John Appleton gave me a few stories about the bees.

1. A. W. Browne later became county supervisor and also served several terms as auditor and recorder.

2. This feeder line connected with the Butterfield Stages (going north via the San Joaquin Valley) at San Fernando.

# THE SILLIMAN REPORT

By CHAS. F. OUTLAND

*A Description of the Recently Discovered Petroleum Region in California, With a Report On the Same by Professor Silliman.* New York; December 1864. 23 pp. Folding map.

Cowan in his *Bibliography of the History of California and the Pacific West 1510-1906*, (1914), erroneously stated that the contents of this work pertained to San Bernardino County. Actually, it is concerned with the oil seepages on the Ojai Rancho and a description of the soil, timber, water, etc., of the region. There were two issues of this pamphlet dated December, 1864, alike in every respect except for the last two pages, which constitute a prospectus of the California Petroleum Co. In one issue the prospectus states that the company "will be organized," and is signed by a committee of three. In the other the organizational work appears to have been completed as the officers and directors are named. It is obvious that copies bearing the signatures of the committee of three were the first to be printed.

The Silliman Report is one of the earliest and rarest printed works that deals exclusively with what is now Ventura County or any portion thereof. If the chain of events that followed its publication is taken into consideration it must also be rated as the most important single publication concerning the region. Such prominent men as T. R. Bard and Dr. Letterman came, or were sent to California on the strength of the optimism expressed by Silliman in his report. The oil companies that were organized were to acquire over 250,000 acres of the best land in the county; and it was T. R. Bard, acting as their agent a few years later, who was to divide up these large holdings into farms for the ever increasing tide of settlers moving west.

Silliman was considered the outstanding oil geologist of his day, primarily because of his association with Drake at the initial oil discovery in Pennsylvania in 1859. It was only natural, therefore, that the eastern capitalists interested in the Ojai oil seepages should retain him to make the investigation.

There is an interesting story told on Silliman. It relates how he was pacing the deck of the boat upon which he was a passenger as the ship steamed up the Santa Barbara Channel. Suddenly the Professor began sniffing the air deeply and becoming quite excited demanded to be put ashore immediately at San Buenaventura. In response to questioning he declared that he smelled petroleum and wanted to land so that he could follow the scent to its source! In his written report he is emphatic in stating that there was a much better landing spot several miles south of the Santa Clara River around the point, (Hueneme) indicating that if there is any truth to the story, the landing must have been a bit damp.



## Miscellany

### FROM THE FILES OF THE "VENTURA SIGNAL"

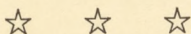
On Tuesday evening last, at the Mission church, by Rev. Father Robio (sic) Miss Clotilda de la Guerra was married to Mr. A. E. Sepulveda, County Auditor of Los Angeles county. The happy couple left on the stage for their home in Los Angeles the same night. Immediately after the wedding the party adjourned to the residence of the bride's mother, on Santa Clara street, where they received the congratulations of their friends, and where an elegant collation was enjoyed. Among the many friends present were the following: Mrs. A. G. Escandon, Mrs. E. de la Guerra, Mrs. H. Miller, Mrs. I. Menchaca, Mrs. L. F. Eastin, Mrs. Kyle, Mrs. F. A. Thompson, Mrs. E. A. Edwards, Mrs. Garpias; Misses Jeannie McLean, Maggie Henning, Erlinda de la Guerra, Rosa de la Guerra, Annie Wagner, Elvira Arnaz, Ysabel Menchaca, Susanna Menchaca; Messers O. Rodgers, J. M. Miller, D. C. Scott, Ed Wagner, O. de la Guerra, F. A. Thompson, F. A. Edwards, Chas. Barlow, Chas. McKeeby, L. F. Eastin, S. Kyle, Jose Lorenzana.

March 1, 1879



N. A. Covarrubias passed through our town on Wednesday on his way to Los Angeles. He was returning from Santa Barbara where he had been attending a meeting of the Democratic County Central Committee, which proved to be a stormy one. Covarrubias was ousted from his seat in the Committee and another man put in; the seat of Alfredo Den, deceased, in the Committee was then filled by the opponents to Covarrubias and certain friends; the clique, having things their own way, then elected a delegation to the State Convention. Covarrubias was turned out because it was charged that he was not legally a citizen of Santa Barbara, ostensibly, but really to give a blow to the aspirations of Judge Sepulveda—the choice of three-fifths of the Democratic voting strength of that County—whom the clique oppose. The meeting was an exciting one, and the end is not yet.

May 27, 1882



Daniel Collins, commonly called "Arizona Jack," or "Happy Jack," died at Saticoy on the night of the 25th of February, from an overdose of whiskey. It appears that during the day he went into Morris Cohn's store at Saticoy, to beg a dring of whiskey. Cohn gave him a beer glass filled with the poison, which he drank, enough in itself to kill an ordinary mortal. But he was given two more glasses by Mr. Cohn, which he drank in rapid succession. Overcome by the liquor he immediately went and laid down, and expired about 10 o'clock in the evening. Mr. Cohn cannot be too severely criticised for his lack of judgment shown in this matter, although in all probability he meant no harm in giving the man the whiskey, still he ought to have known better. Such trifling is most dangerous. March 1, 1879.

## ***MEMBERSHIP***

### **LIFE**

Mrs. Edith Hoffman  
Mrs. Grace Smith  
Mrs. Marie Holsten Price

### **SUSTAINING**

Richard Bard  
Adolfo Camarillo  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter H. Duval

### **NEW MEMBERS**

Philip Bard, Ph.D.  
Manuel Bettencourt  
Thos. C. Carr  
Gilbertson's Oil Tool Works  
Oxnard Public Library  
Mrs. R. G. Percy  
Wm. E. Rehm

L. W. Rundle  
Mr. and Mrs. M. L. Russell  
Kenneth Sheldon  
Simi Elementary School  
Mrs. Blanche B. Stubblefield  
Mr. M. Arthur Waite

### **HALF A CENTURY OF SERVICE**

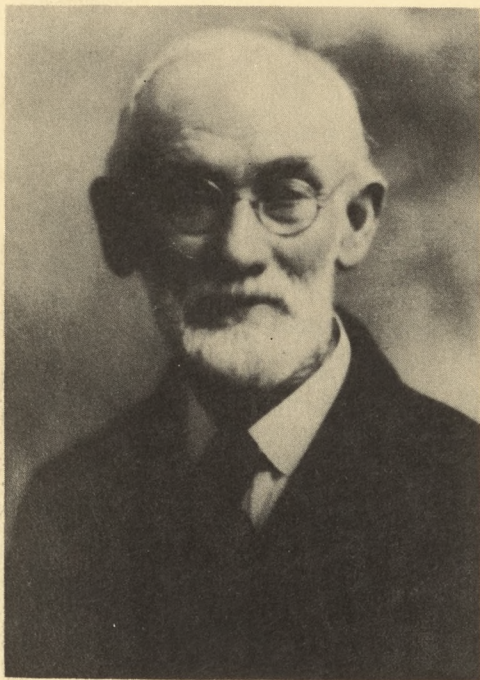
Reserved for business firms that are sustaining members of the Historical Society, and that have been serving the people of Ventura County for 50 years or more.

*Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Co.* Organized on April 4, 1898 with E. P. Foster, president, N. W. Blanchard, vice president, and Charles Barnard, secretary. For over 57 years this old Ventura County business firm has faithfully followed the high standards set by its pioneer organizers.

*Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association.* Organized in April 1890 as the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association with J. R. Hall, president, Caspar Taylor, vice-president, and H. H. Youngken, secretary. For 65 years this organization has served the interests of home owners and builders, as well as those of the investor.



*The*  
VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*QUARTERLY*



George W. Faulkner

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# *The Ventura County Historical Society*

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The Ventura County Historical Society's headquarters is the Pioneer Museum, 77 North California Street, Ventura, California. There are three classes of membership—active, \$5 per year, sustaining, \$25 per year and life, \$100.

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# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

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NOVEMBER, 1956

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## Half a Century of Service

In the 83 years that have elapsed since Ventura County came into being there have been many business concerns and organizations formed to carry on their respective trades with the public. The vast majority of those formed fifty years or more ago have long since passed out of existence. The reasons for their passing are many—panics and national depressions, fire, poor business ability and lack of foresight in fostering sound public relations. Some of these firms, either because of their owners or some colorful episode connected with them, are of historical interest and will be noted from time to time in the *Quarterly*.

The Ventura County Historical Society is, however, particularly interested in those firms that have been in continuous operation in the county for fifty years or more and that are still in business. As a general rule they are the direct antithesis of the firms that have failed. Founded by pioneers upon a solid foundation of sound business principles these are the firms that have contributed so much to the progress and history of the county. We hope that they are as interested in the Ventura County Historical Society and its efforts to preserve that history for future generations.

It is conceivable that a business house could violate some of the rules of conducting a sound business and continue to operate for an indefinite time. It would seem almost impossible, however, for such a concern to function for even a short period if it did not give service. To our historic business houses that have been serving the people of the county for fifty years or more the Ventura County Historical Society offers its congratulations and an invitation to join it in preserving the history of Ventura County. The HALF A CENTURY OF SERVICE membership is reserved for those business organizations that have passed the most difficult test of all—Time.

# The Story of Candalaria

As told by her to George Henley and  
Dr. Bizzel of the Sespe in 1914

Some fourteen years ago I met the old Indian woman, Candalaria, in Sespe Canyon, and hearing that she was the last of the Indian tribe known as the Sespe tribe, I induced her to give me some of the language of her people for preservation. This she readily consented to do. At that time her memory was better than now, I having succeeded in getting the full conjugation of the verbs, a regular count from 1 to 100, but unfortunately the papers were lost, and desiring more recently to make another attempt in conjunction with Dr. Bizzel of the Sespe, hearing she was alive and living near Ventura. I first saw her again on December 20, 1913, and made arrangements for her to come to my house to live while taking down such legends, songs, old Indian customs that she might still remember. As the old Indian could only talk her dialect and a poor Spanish, I got her interpretation in Spanish, which I afterwards turned into English.

Candalaria is the last of the Sespe Indians, being born on Lord's Creek, north of Sespe railroad station, Ventura County. She says she is 75 years old. She is married to Jose Valenzuela, a native of Cacerpe, Sonora, and had been living for some time between Montalvo and Saticoy. She busies herself in making Indian baskets and other light work. Rheumatism and an affliction of her eyesight have been troubling her for some time. Sespe tribe was known to the old Spanish priests as the fiercest of the country, and fourteen years ago this spirit would break out in Candalaria when in her cups. Fierce war-whoops would then ring and re-echo in Sespe Canyon on Tepee and Henley's Flat (an old battle-ground and Indian camp), so much so that an eastern tenderfoot, an oil driller, once abandoned his camp at midnight for fear of harm. Candalaria has taught several young American girls the art of Indian basket making at Ventura, and the two methods of dying the reeds black. Her facial expression is kindly and hides her feelings, as with all Indians.

## Information from Candalaria

Close to Saticoy there lived an old Indian named Tomas Cora, who was deaf. From his cabin in the last days of December he would watch the rising sun, seated in front of his door on the ground. Three peaks can be seen to the south of east from his position. The sun would pass the middle peak on the way south, pass in the valley, remain two days, and on the third day would come up again over the middle peak on its way north. He would then notify the other Indians of the new year. He followed this practice for years. The months of the year had their names:





Candalaria.

Ka-pu-ne—When the buds spring from the willow.

Wotpololo—When the willow is in flower.

Iweakedne—When the willow blossoms drop.

The Tejon Indians were north of the Serrano; the Sespe and Ventura Indians south and west of the Serranos; the Piru Indians did not speak the Sespe-Ventura tongue. The Matilija Indians spoke the same dialect as those of Ventura and Sespe.

Fish lines were made from the Kioto or Spanish bayonet, also from a fiber plant called tok, growing at Si-top topo, a range just north of Ojai; the place where it grows was called Si tok tok. I have seen the fiber at her house; it is like fine flax. Nets and fish lines were made from it.

An Indian rancheria was located in Santa Paula at a place between Blanchard's packing house and the railroad depot on the north side of the track at a large sycamore tree(1). There was the only dwelling where now stands Santa Paula. An Indian family lived there and numerous Indians would come to visit. On the death of the old Indian head of the house, the widow was left with four sons, two of whom were hung for horse-stealing (Salisto and Chino). The hanging was done by Spaniards from Ventura. The two remaining boys harvested a crop of grain which had been growing, also beans, chili, acorns, etc., placed it in the house, sold off all the stock, and left, never to return. The old squaw, after the departure of her boys, began packing the crop to a cave located in the high hills south of Santa Paula



and across the Santa Clara. She used the regular Indian basket, or cora, with a rawhide strap placed over her forehead. After the job was completed she sealed up the entrance to the cave with stones and leaves. This supply lasted her two years, and when the time came when she suffered for food and as she was in danger of starvation, Indians from Saticoy came after her and built a hut for her at that place and looked after her wants.

The Indians would come up the Sespe for trout as soon as the water in the stream got clear. It seems they did not make much use of the river benches south of Devil's Gate, as no Indian remains can be found there. But above the Gate, at Henley's Camp, at the junction of Cold Water Creek with the Sespe, evidence shows it was of some importance because of numerous grinding holes in the rocks and boulders. Pestles, steatite cooking pots, obsidian arrowheads, chip-pings, Indian baskets covered on the outside with asphaltum, are found. A cave on the plateau still showing the camp-fire smoke is located within a stone's throw of the plateau trail. Close by and in the same cave is a place where the Indians had their sleeping quarters. From this cave the distant Alamo Mountains to the north and the Santa Monica range to the south could be seen. It evidently was a lookout and signal station.

A legend records that a big fight occurred at what is now Henley's Flat, in which the Sespe Indians got the worst of it, all being killed taking part. The aggressors were from the north and east, probably the Mojave Apaches(2), a branch of that powerful and fierce race who were gradually overcoming all tribes that stood in their path along the whole front from the Pecos River in New Mexico to the Sespe and the coast in Ventura. The Indians buried on Henley's Flat are found to all be facing the rising sun.

The obsidian (volcanic glass) for arrowheads and spear heads was obtained at Grimes Pass, where Sycamore Canyon comes in(3). At the same place yellow ochre, also red and other colors was obtained. The steatite cooking pots were secured in trade from the island Indians to the south.

The tobacco smoked by the Indians (shou) came from the Tejon already prepared in packages. It is called by the Mexicans "pespivate" and grows wild in the mountains of Tejon. The storm waters of the Piru Creek often carry the seeds down stream and into the Santa Clara. The weed has been seen growing near Saticoy. This pespivate was also prepared for eating (presumably for chewing). Evenings a number of Indians would gather, place the pespivate in a small mortar, grind it fine, mix it with a little lime, then add a little water. The mixture was then sipped by using the fingers. After a little while they would leave the house and vomit, then all would leave in a semi-stupor for their homes. The Indians at Tejon still smoke and eat this herb.

In utilizing acorns for food they leave them in the sun to partly dry and crack, when the shell is picked off. Then they are well dried



in the sun, ground into a flour, then put into an olla covered with fresh water, let stand for ten hours, drained, then repeated a second time, till the bitter taste has left; then the acorn mash is cooked with venison, rabbit, etc.

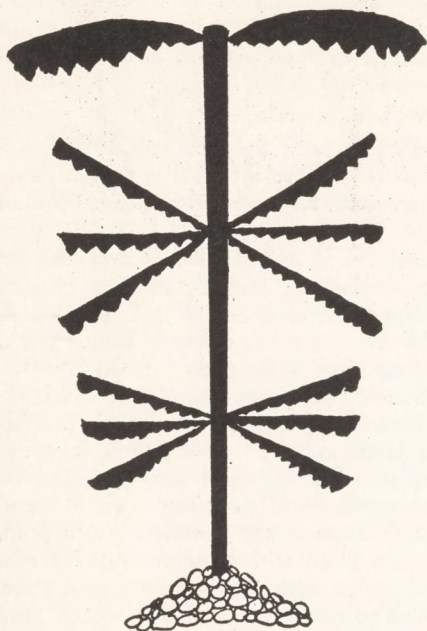
Fish were dried in the sun without smoking.

Hollyberries were roasted on coals until they turned white, then they were put into "waris" or platted ollas to sweat five or ten days. After that they were fit to eat without further preparation. Indian for hollyberry is "toyon."

The mej-me, is Spanish "junco," is a rush four feet and over in height and used in making coras or baskets, and is found at Sauzal, near the mouth of the Ventura River. After it is cut it is carried to a curing station. On top of a cold layer of ashes a fire is built. When burnt down the cold layer beneath has sufficiently heated for the purpose. Then the reeds are run in and out through the lower ash layer singly, all the time with sufficient care to prevent their burning. This is continued until the reeds turn from green to white, then they are placed in the sun to dry, after which they are split into strands. To get the black color, there are two methods of procedure, an old and the new. The new way is as follows: Acorns are pounded into a pulp, introduced with an iron into an olla filled with water and the reeds. This method produces a fast black color with the least waste of time. The old way is the more tedious. The reeds are buried in black mud for four weeks.

The drawing illustrates crudely the appearance of the totem pole (4) which was erected on the new year day on top of the easternmost peak of the San Cayetano Mountains. Height four feet, six inches, diameter one and a half inches, painted a dead black. The top two feathers were from the buzzard's wing, fastened to the top of the pole with asphaltum. The two bunches below were from the crow, also fastened with asphaltum. The pole was sunken into the ground a short distance and small rocks piled around the base to keep it in an erect position during the year. It was prepared at the foot of the mountain on Lord's Creek and carried up the ridge to the east of the creek. The down of the wild goose was promiscuously scattered over the surroundings after the erection of the pole. On the day of the erection (reversal of the sun), offerings of beads, food, trinkets, etc., were made. They sang about the pole, men and women, asking for a bountiful year; this festival lasted for two days. When the acorn crop was on, a visit would be made with offerings of whatever was harvested, and a dance would begin about the pole called "I-shoi-osh." Also sufficient of the crop would be stored in case of a bad year, to be used as an offering to I-shoi-osh. They had a master of ceremonies. This pole would be burned at the end of the winter solastice and the new one erected. This ceremony continued until forty years ago and even after all of them had professed the Catholic faith.

Bows were three feet long and made from the Toyon and Souco, reinforced with sinew and strung with the same material. Arrows from



Candalaria's drawing of ceremonial pole erected on San Cayetano Mountain at the Winter Solstice.

reeds and Toyon, obsidian arrowheads. The arrow ends had three feathers.

At their dances only two women entered. One man sang. When the women were tired two others took their places. This was kept up until morning.

In the early days of the Spaniards the priests dominated the country. A large percentage of the Indians were forced to live at Ventura, where their labor was enforced (she, Candalaria called it slavery). After the conquest of California by the Americans under Fremont, the system of slavery was abolished and all offenders in jail released. The Indians looked upon the Americans as deliverers. On the near approach of the American troops the priests gathered the people in the church and there counseled them to resist the invaders, stating that the Americans would kill them all if Ventura fell. The Spanish and half-breed Indians were under arms, but on the approach of the Americans fled in disorder to the hills north of town. The Indians were forced to join Sunday Mass, the alcalde crying the hour on the streets of Ventura. They worked with little clothing, usually only a G-string for the men.

One year after the death of a chief, invitations were sent to the friends to meet at Ventura, where a feast was spread (no drinking) with dancing and singing. The clothing of the deceased chief that



had been carefully preserved had been brought in a bundle, thrown into a fire prepared for the purpose, while the tribe and invited guests danced about the fire weeping and throwing offerings of food, shells and other trinkets. After the ceremony, which lasted five days, was over the fire hole was filled level with the surface and the Indians departed for their homes.

A daughter of an Indian chief had many offers of marriage from sons of other chieftians, but always refused them. Her father became discouraged and felt himself disgraced. After an interval of time another son of a chief presented himself for her hand, only to be refused. Then the young woman's father called the father of the boy to his house and informed him she had disgraced him by her desire to remain single and offered to hand her over to him that he might do as he wished with her, even to kill her. He was instructed to call a council of all the chiefs of the tribes to discuss this important matter. A feast was arranged and all the chiefs agreed she merited death. The girl was invited to partake of the feasting and dancing but steadfastly refused to leave her domicile. She remained at her fireside and no coaxing could make her change her mind. While the feast was progressing a dragon was constructed and made ready. During the dancing a great noise was heard in the sky. A monster was descending upon them and they feared greatly. An aged Indian arose from among them and ordered that all should stop talking or making any noise. The monster, which had the appearance of a snake, gradually came nearer. The girl in the meantime was in her hut seated, crushing chilis in a mortar, when the dragon entered. It entered her abdomen and tore her entrails to shreds. This is reported as having occurred in Ventura and Candalaria was told of it by an old woman when Candalaria was a little girl.

In their ceremonial dances chili and pinons were eaten, and absolutely no stimulants were used before the Spanish came. Only the dancers were bedecked with plumes, made of crows' black feathers and white wild geese feathers, made in the form of a duster and carried in the hand. Also there was worn about the loins feathers in several layers, the first were long, from the condors, and a wreath of feathers on the head, besprinkled with yellow and brown down.

The rattle to beat time with, in later days, was made of a tin can. (This in the days of the padres.) No doubt the older form was a rawhide constructed by stretching over a round wooden frame. During the feast only the best dancers were allowed to enter the feast house. This house was round, about 25 feet in diameter, built of poles in the form of a tepee, a hole on the top to let out the smoke. A fire was lighted, the singers and guests seated against the walls in a circle. Two dancers arose, taking opposite directions. At the end of the song the dancers were back at the starting point.

When a chief's son sought the hand of a chief's daughter, the young man's blood relations went to the house of the girl's parents

with offering of presents. The acceptance of the presents was equivalent to consent. On the wedding day both parties brought food. They danced and made merry all night and until sunrise, when the company parted, the new couple going to the tepee(5) prepared for them.

Temaskal—A sweat house built by starting a round excavation several feet deep, a house built of poles, adobe plastered against the poles up to the roof, dry dirt against this (6). The house was large enough for 10 men to stand upright in. Access was had through a low door. Dry wood placed handy inside the entrance was handy for the men to feed the fire. Smoke escaped through a hole in the roof. The healthy Indians, after the sweat, jumped into cold water, but not the sick.

Fire was made by rubbing wood together until a spark of fire was produced, when the spark would be picked up with punk (rotten wood) and the operation proceeded with in the usual way. Sticks of water willow very dry were used, these being as thick as a lead pencil and rotated between the palms of the hands until the friction had brought the desired spark.

#### NOTES

(*Editor's Note:* The Candalaria Story as presented here has been somewhat condensed from the original. Nine pages of Indian vocabulary have been omitted and some slight changes made in paragraphing. The original may be seen at the Pioneer Museum or at Southwest Museum.)

1. Candalaria's location for the Mupu Village would place it about where the box shed of the Santa Paula Citrus Association stands today. There are still two large sycamores growing here.

2. What Henley calls the Mohave-Apache are now more generally called Yavapai.

3. Scientists have disagreed over the nature of this Grimes Pass "obsidian." It is now generally thought to be fused shale.

4. "Ceremonial Pole" would be more accurate here. "Totem Pole" has specific meanings applied principally to the customs of the North Pacific Indians.

5. California Indians did not use tepees.

6. Temescal is the correct spelling. The word is Spanish-Mexican, not Indian as Henley infers here.



## Oldtimers

Mr. H. H. Elkins

% Strand Theatre, City

At Old Home Place, June 8, 1928

Dear Friend,

True to my promise to write you about what I remember of the old timers who once lived in and about Sespi, Piru Creeks and Santa Paula, in Ventura County.

Ari Hopper—first, because he was and is the most notable among the list you gave me. He was a great hunter, and Democratic politician; he could talk louder and longer about his exploits in hunting bear in the Sespi and Piru Hills than any man in the County.

Among his many stories about bear hunting he told one on himself (which was very unlikely): While out hunting bear he ran across a grizzly which he shot and wounded severely. The bear being very close to him, made a rush at him forcing him to climb a leaning tree which the bear could climb, and did follow after him up the tree and out on a large limb, following him very closely, when he took off his old slouch hat and hit the bear on the nose exclaiming, "Go back, you damned fool, the limb will break and kill us both." Of course nobody believed the yarn, but it was always interesting to listen to his stories whether true or not, and his friends pretended to take him seriously.

Ari was quite a leader as a Democrat in politics of the County; not that his choice of candidates were successful; on the contrary, those whom he supported or nominated were almost always defeated. I speak from personal experience, for it was he who nominated me for District Attorney at one of the County elections(1) and at that election I was defeated by the Democratic "donkey", together with the whole party candidates.

Ira Cannon(2) ran for Congress on the Democratic and Peoples party ticket and was elected and Ari said he was "damned sorry of it, he was not my choice." Ari was a lovable old man and had many friends. Bill Guiberson went hunting with him on many occasions. One time they both shot a bear at the same time and each claimed he killed the bear (either wound would have killed it), and they almost came to blows over the incident. Finally Guiberson said, "Take your damned old meat, I'll have the hide," and he took and kept it. A long time afterwards Ari said, "I killed that bear but Bill beat me out of the hide."

The dear old fellow met with an untimely death shortly after he moved to Los Angeles County to live, by the accidental discharge of a gun being taken from the wagon while out hunting with friends. "Peace with his soul across the Divide."

Bill and Doc Guiberson, brothers, I never had much to do with. They were both good citizens. The doctor was at the service of the poor as well as the rich whenever called upon. Both of them drank heaps of whiskey, that sometimes interfered with their usefulness, but they were jolly good fellows nevertheless.



Joe Dye, the mankiller, was bad all through. He had a way of insulting a person he did not like by spitting in his face to provoke a fight, and then shooting the man and never missing, for he always saw to it that he had the advantage of the draw. I know of two instances where he killed his man without just provocation, the last being Herman Haines of Santa Paula whom he had insulted in his usual manner and when Haines had started down the street with his back to Dye, Dye shot him in the back, killing him instantly—a cold-blooded murder as was ever committed in this western country(3).

He was tried for murder and acquitted on the grounds of self defense. Dr. Crawford, a dentist of Los Angeles, for some reason was Dye's friend and gave bail and employed counsel—White and Gay lawyers of Los Angeles—to defend him and they cleared him(4). Crawford stuck to him to the end.

Not long after his acquittal, Dye had a dispute with Mason Bradfield (a mere boy) over some oil claims. It appeared that Bradfield had located an oil claim that Dye had put him on and the time came to prove up. Bradfield did it in his own name and refused to deed it to Dye and Dye threatened to kill Bradfield if he did not deed the oil claim within a given time. In the meantime, Bradfield had gone to Los Angeles to live with his mother and Dye went there for the purpose of carrying out his threat—to get a deed or kill Bradfield.

He stated openly that he would do one or the other if Bradfield still refused to comply with his request and he proceeded to look for Bradfield and while walking up Wall Street on the north side abreast of a warehouse just below Los Angeles Street, Bradfield, seeing him from a window across Wall Street in the second story of a rooming house where he and his mother were occupying rooms, shot Dye with buckshot, killing him. Of course, with Dye's threat to kill Bradfield on sight known by many persons, his killing Dye from ambush was held to be a justifiable act by the coroner's jury by a verdict of "not guilty", being justifiable homicide. He was never brought to trial in a higher court. Bradfield is yet living (or was a short time ago) in Los Angeles. Dye living by the sword died by the sword, and I don't think he will be pardoned of his earthly sins by a just God—beyond the curtain of death. This is the end of the tragedy concerning Joe Dye (5).

William Chormicle and Bill Jenkins can be classified in the same narration. It seems that Chormicle had taken up some land in the vicinity of the Castaic which Bill Jenkins claimed by right of possession only. He had no legal title to it, and he undertook to make good by the shotgun method of the old west—not personally, no, no, not he—but with his Mexican and Indian retainers, it was enough that Chormicle's claim encroached upon his cherished land possessions, also interfered with his water claim which was most valuable of all. Therefore, he laid siege to oust Chormicle from his hastily built house on the land; in fact, he surrounded the house with his hired retainers and kept Chormicle in the cabin for nearly a week, making it dangerous



to step out, aiming to starve Chormicle to surrender and evacuate. During this gun fight, Jenkins' men lying under cover within rifle range, Chormicle shot and killed one of Jenkins' men and Jenkins had him arrested for murder and the case came to trial in Los Angeles County, for it happened that the place was just within that county. However, Chormicle was acquitted on the grounds of self defense, but Jenkins kept up the warfare until Chormicle got an injunction, and at the same time established his legal claim to the land and Jenkins retired to his upper Castaic holdings to which he really had legal title, and this closes the last chapter in connection with these oldtimers.

Brice Grimes, another oldtimer, was for a short time in the hardware business at Ventura as partner with E. A. Edwards, then turned rancher in the Sespi vicinity (6)—a democrat, attending every convention held by the party and never failed to make what he called a speech, and sometimes three or four, taking advantage of every opportunity on questions of privilege to paw the air and let off steam.

Don Del Valle of the Rancho Camulos, the oldest settler on the Santa Clara River, the house being just above where Piru Creek empties into the river. He was elected a state senator (I think the first from that senatorial district). He was a Castillian Spaniard, educated, and was a courtly gentleman of the old school type, and generous in his hospitality to everyone whom he admitted to his house. His son, R. F. Del Valle, was his successor as a state senator who now lives at Los Angeles practicing law. The Camulos Rancho is notable now because of Helen Hunt Jackson's story "Ramona". (7)

The foregoing biography recalls some of the incidents that took place in the by-gone days in the neighborhood of the Sespi and Piru Creeks which includes Santa Paula. It might have been told better, but it is to the best of my recollection a true statement of occurrences that took place, and gives a general idea of the character of the persons named. A recital of the many funny things that happened by and among these people would fill a large book, if I could remember them all.

So my dear Elkins, please accept this as a full payment of my promise, and be assured that I am your friend.

Respectfully

N. C. BLEDSOE

#### NOTES

1. Probably nominating conventions is intended.
2. Marion Cannon, Mound rancher, elected to Congress in 1892. Served one term.
3. Haines was shot twice by Dye in the store of Morris Cohn and was shot in the back as he left the store. Haines lived for several days after the shooting.
4. Dye was found guilty of second degree murder. Stephen M. White and Henry T. Gage (later Governor of California) were Dye's counsel and secured his release on bail pending appeal to higher courts.
5. Bradfield was acquitted, but shortly after the trial he shot and wounded George Henley at Fillmore. For this he served a short term in San Quentin.
6. The Sespi spelling used here occasionally appears in old documents and newspapers. Grimes Canyon is named for Brice Grimes.
7. Ignacio del Valle was elected to the State Assembly in 1852. His son, Reginaldo del Valle, entered the Legislature in 1882 serving several terms.



## Pioneer Insurance

The great wave of westward migration that characterized the last half of the nineteenth century carried with it a young man named Marcus de Lafayette Todd. Mr. Todd, after looking over much of the available land in the state, purchased a fine farm in the Briggs district of Ventura County. A short time later he married Dora Ricker, daughter of a forty-niner, and settled down to raise a family and develop his ranch. It is not known when the original family home was built, but as the family grew additions were made to the house until it became the well remembered landmark on highway 126.

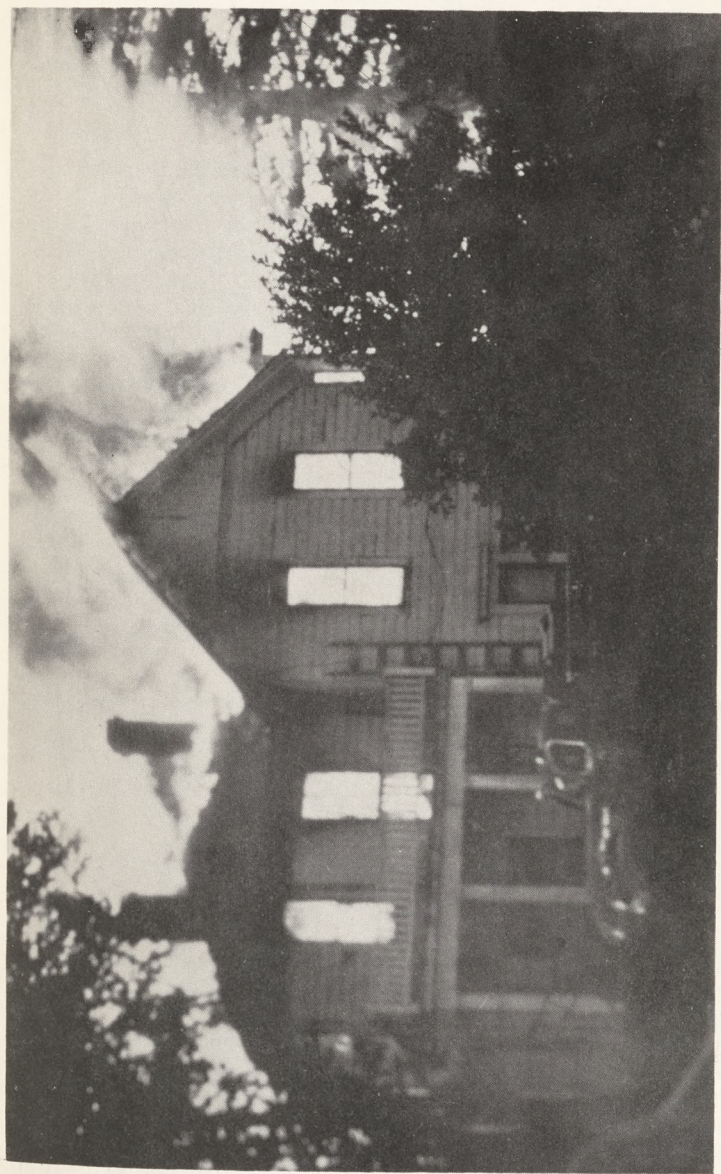
One source of irritation to Mr. Todd and to the other early pioneer settlers was the high cost of fire insurance that they were forced to pay on their buildings. This annoyance was apparently state wide, for in 1897 the State Legislature passed an act permitting the formation of county mutual insurance companies. On April 4, 1898, a group of resourceful pioneers met at the Anacapa Hotel in San Buenaventura to organize the Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Company. The list of those present reads like a Pioneer Register and among them was Marcus de Lafayette Todd, who was to become one of the first policy holders.

Years passed by and many changes came over the Santa Clara Valley. Land that the pioneers had used for beans and wheat was now growing premium lemons and oranges. A new generation had been born and still another. Mr. Todd had long since passed away, to be followed by his wife in the 1930's. The pioneer house he had built was now the home of his great-grandchildren. But one thing still remained unchanged—the company that Marcus de Lafayette Todd had helped found many years before, the Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, still protected the house that by now was an historic landmark.

Late in the afternoon of November 1, 1948, the demon that is the terror of all rural areas struck—struck as it so often does, suddenly, relentlessly, mercilessly. Smoke oozed out from under shingles and eaves and curled skyward. The first fireman on the scene thought that the house could be saved, but they forgot that this was no modern building with fire guards in the walls. Hot embers dropping from attic to foundation were igniting wood that had been seasoned by the east winds of three quarters of a century. In an hour nothing was left of "The Old Todd House" but smoldering embers.

Marcus de Lafayette Todd, like most of the organizers of the Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, had been dead many years; but the company they had founded had grown and prospered with the passing years. A few days after the fire Claim No. 1307 was paid in full and the story of a pioneer's house and the insurance policy that had protected it for 50 years came to a close.





The Todd House, November 1, 1948.

# Farm Life in 1882

Excerpts from the Diary of G. W. Faulkner

*Editor's Note:* The entries presented here from Mr. Faulkner's diary have been selected with the thought of giving the reader a word picture of farm life as it was 75 years ago. No corrections have been made in spelling, grammar or punctuation.

## January

2. Put pump in well and took dinner and spent the afternoon at Mr. Blanchard's(1). 3. Shelled corn. Took corn to mill to get it cracked. Brought home harrow. 4. Hoed strawberries and painted harrow. Finished plowing wheat stubble and commenced barley stubble. 5. Husked corn and fixed meat for smoking. 9. Notified members of F. C. W. Co.(2) of a meeting to be held in the afternoon. Attended meeting of ditch co. Went to Mr. Todd's for papers. Painted harrow. 10. Went to Santa Paula to see about flumes. Moved fence to let stock on corn stalks. Took tea at Mr. Anderson's(3). 12. Went to Santa Paula to get blacksmithing done. Terrible east wind. Put up fence and propped school house(4). 13. Repaired house door. Put threshold under kitchen door. Strengthened tank at schoolhouse. 14. Repaired corn sheller. Went to China wedding at Mr. Corey's in the evening. 17. Cleaned buggy wheels and painted them. Helped straighten up school house. 25. Made rubber blocks for spring wagon and sand-papered bed for painting. Worked on flume in afternoon. 29. Attended S.S. at Santa Paula. Also preaching by Rev. Jones(5). 31. Worked on Haines flume. Prayer meeting at home same evening.

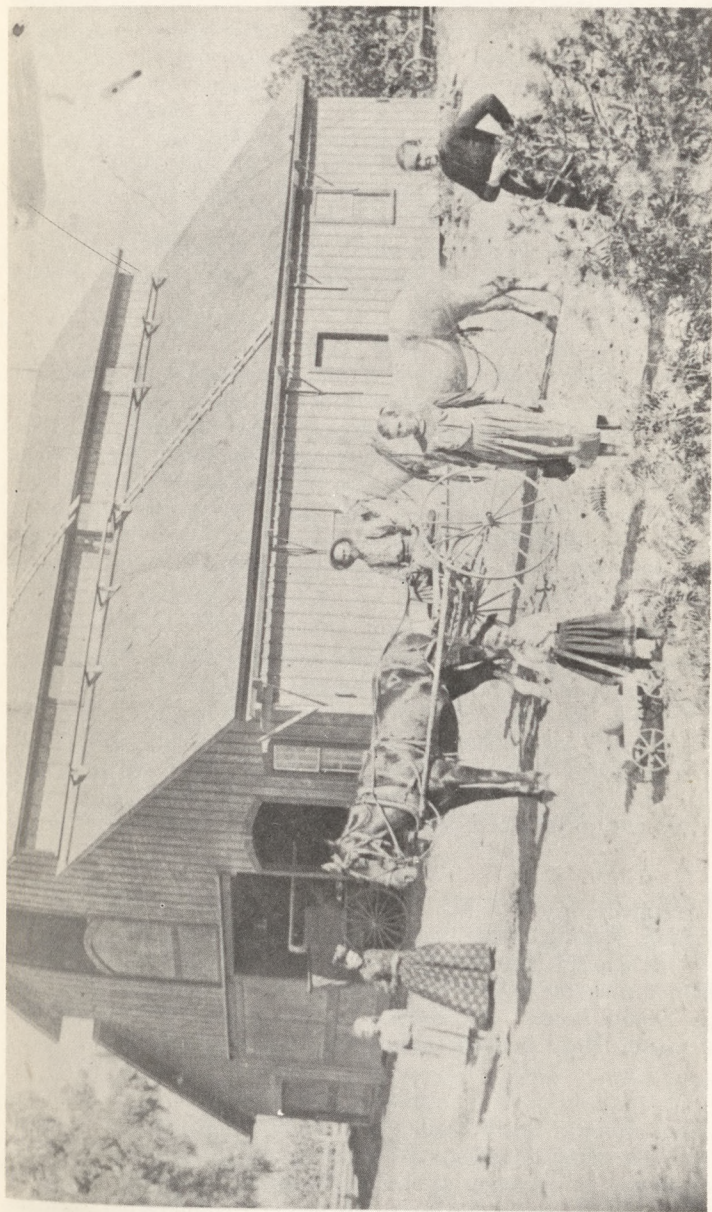
## February

4. Went to San Buenaventura for lumber for culverts. Also brought out fencing for E. S. Hall(6). 11. Made irrigating ditch. Attended meeting at the school house. Went to lodge in the evening. 12. Went to Sunday School and preaching at Santa Paula. Preaching by Rev. Taylor(7). 20. Commenced irrigating, ditch broke. Water commenced to come again at 4:00. 27. Separated hogs. Put up barb wire around alfalfa. Went across the river to see about seeding the place over there.

## March

1. Went to ranch across the river. Went to J. Y. Saviers for pulverizer and seed sower, got ready to sow grain. 6. Commenced plowing irrigated ground for barley. 9. Sowed barley. Took plow shears to get sharpened. 10. Prepared to irrigate. Commenced raining at noon. 14. Went to Peralta's for cow. Rained(8). 15. Repaired chairs. Took corn to hogs. Pruned vines. 18. Pruned in old orchard and went to Santa Paula for branding iron. 23. Finished plowing around trees in new orchard and rigged stalk rake and commenced to rake stalks. 27. Harrowed for wheat. Went to Mr. Cummings(9) for drill. Drilled wheat. 29. Went to Mr. Stewart's for sulky plow. Set out plants and trees. Burned corn stalks.





The Faulkner family, 1889. Left to right: Stella (Outland), Miss Lousia Seymour (Hedrick), Seymour, Mr. Faulkner, Alpha (Ayers) and Mrs. Faulkner.



### *April*

3. Went to see Linebarger about taking hogs and separated hogs. Plowed some up front of the house and barn. 6. Worked in flower garden. 9. Went to S.S. and preaching at Santa Paula. Preaching by Rev. Wells(10). 10. Sowed White Belgian oats. Staked out ground for catalpa trees. Planted garden seeds. 11. Planted out trees in new orchard, went to Mr. Jepson's (11) for bees. 17. Started Stockton plow. Planted melon seeds and got ready to irrigate. 21. Cut up and salted hog, and pruned in new orchard. 22. Got vineyard ready to irrigate and pruned in new orchard. 26. Finished irrigating orchard and strawberry patch and commenced on bean ground. 29. Sowed bald barley on irrigated ground. Went to Santa Paula in the evening. 30. Attended S.S. at Santa Paula. Heard sermon read by Mr. Blanchard.

### *May*

Got corn planter and repaired it and commenced planting corn. 4. Hoed strawberries and among flowers and commenced planting lima beans. 13. Planted potatoes and harrowed the ground. 15. Clod-mashed potato patch and drilled buck wheat. 20. Went to San Buena Ventura to settle up school house matters. Went to lodge in the evening. 24. Went to Santa Paula and to mill(12). Got horses shod and shelled load of corn. 25. Replanted lima beans. Repaired fence. Went to Mr. Cummings for hogs. 27. Went to Quarterly Conference at Pleasant Valley.

### *June*

1. Worked at screen doors and went to Santa Paula. Shelled load of corn. 5. Propped peach trees. Cultivated in melon patch. 7. Went to J. Y. Saviers for gum trees. Took dinner at Mr. Frazier's. 10. Thinned out corn and pulled barley out of the wheat. 13. Plowed weeds and volunteer potatoes. Went to Santa Paula to see self-binder work(13). 14. Was sick with the measles. 27. Grubbed willows along the lane and put up wire in alfalfa patch. Cultivated corn in orchard.

### *July*

4. Irrigated corn. 11. Went across the river to see about getting wheat headed. Went to Santa Paula in the evening to meeting of church trustees. 14. Picked fruit and took it to Santa Paula. Fixed bull so he could not suck the corn. 23. Attended S.S. at Santa Paula. Also at Briggs School house. 26. Helped to get self-binder to work. 29. Shocked wheat. Hoed in front of house among peach trees.

### *August*

2. Took fruit to Santa Paula. Got ready to go to camp meeting. 3. Started for camp meeting. Went as far as Mr. Fish's(14) and stayed all night. 6. At camp meeting. Preaching by Rev. Bovard(15) and others. 8. Went to Sexton's Nursery(16) and from there to camp meeting. 11. Took Bro Bovard to Santa Paula and peaches to



Easley's. 16. Staked walnut trees. Took fruit to Mr. Easley and went to mill. 21. Hauled wheat and went to San Buenaventura for sacks. Came home by New Jerusalem. 24. Finished hauling wheat and commenced hauling barley. 26. Pulled beans and attended primary election. Went to I. O. G. F. in the evening.

### *September*

2. Went to Democratic County Convention. 4. Pulled beans. Went to town and to Mr. Peck's for chairs. Commenced threshing. 6. Cut lima beans. Took load of grain to mill. Went to social singing at Mr. Haines. 9. Went to Hueneme and Ventura to sell wheat. 18. Picked fruit and made corral to separate hogs. Went to Santa Paula in the evening with apples. 23. Threshed buckwheat. Went to lodge in the evening. 25. Cleaned buckwheat. Packed fruit and went to see about letting church contract(17). 27. Pulled beans. Cleaned buckwheat. Picked fruit. Threshed beans. Went to Republican meeting in the evening.

### *October*

2. Picked apples and cleaned up small white beans. Commenced threshing limas. 5. Cut bandages from buds. Went to see chinamen about corn-husking. Hauled lima beans to Mr. Wolivers. Went to band meeting. 7. Pulled corn for hogs and tramped beans. 12. Went for chinamen to husk corn. Hauled cobs for them. Went to speaking in Santa Paula in the evening. 14. Hauled flooring to Santa Paula for the church. Went to lodge in the evening. 16. Went to Blanchard's Mill with corn. Picked fallen fruit. Commenced digging potatoes. 21. Finished tramping beans and cleaned them up. Went to meeting of Home Protection Society(18) at Santa Paula. Went to lodge entertainment in the evening. 23. Repaired pump for Mr. Cummings. Sowed sacks. Brought balance of lima beans from Mr. Woliver's. 24. Put some hay in the barn. Cleaned lima beans and picked hen. Went to social singing at Mr. Anderson's in the evening. 27. Fixed pump for J. F. Cummings and went to barbecue. Attended political meeting in the evening.

### *November*

7. Went to election. 8. Rained. Practiced cornet. 14. Went to Santa Paula to see about plastering the church. Went to band meeting in evening. 20. Gathered potatoes. Went to singing at Mr. Olmsted's. 30. Attended Thanksgiving services at Santa Paula. Took dinner at Briggs Schoolhouse.

### *December*

6. Made ditch to take water to stock. Picked up apples and took them to S. P. Attended trustees meeting. 7. Went to San Buenaventura with buckwheat. 9. Put sight on rifle and went to Santa Paula to see about church matters. Stayed to lodge. 14. Hoed weeds in front of the house. Went to Santa Paula in the evening to practice singing for the dedication(19). 22. Fixed pump at hog watering place. Started stalk rake. Went to see more land. 25. Went to river hunting and to

Santa Paula to arrange Christmas tree. Also to Christmas tree in the evening. 26. Went to Santa Paula with apples. Brought home plow and chinaman. Picked up potatoes for Jim Chinaman and helped Mr. Anderson to butcher hog. 29. Took lumber to Santa Paula for the church and worked at outhouse. 31. Attended S.S. at Santa Paula and Briggs.

#### NOTES

1. Nathan W. Blanchard, founder of Santa Paula.
2. Farmer's Canal and Water Co.
3. M. H. Anderson was Mr. Faulkner's closest neighbor for over 50 years. The best of friends (it is known that there never was a cross word passed between them), still they always addressed each other as Mr. Faulkner and Mr. Anderson.
4. The wind mentioned here became the standard yardstick by which later hard blows were measured. The oldtimers often called it, "The east wind that blew the schoolhouse down." Mr. Faulkner's diary would indicate that the building actually did not blow down, but merely developed a decided lean toward the west.
5. Contemporary newspapers contain no information on Reverend Jones. He was probably a circuit rider sent out by the Church Board to preach to communities having no organized church.
6. E. S. Hall was an early day attorney, realtor and insurance man. As a speculator he may have bought land in the Briggs section hoping for a quick sale.
7. Rev. T. E. Taylor was founder of the Ventura Presbyterian Church. About 1880 he had a congregation at Ojai.
8. Julio Peralta of Santa Paula Canyon, who came to the region in 1849.
9. John Cummings, an early settler in the Briggs district.
10. Rev. S. T. Wells was a large property owner in the Saticoy section. He was an ordained Presbyterian minister. Wells Road is named for him.
11. A. A. Jepson of the Sespe area. He is listed as early as 1875 in the County Directory.
12. Blanchard and Bradley Mill at Santa Paula.
13. The first successful self-binder was invented in 1876. This may be the initial appearance of the machine in Ventura County.
14. Mr. Henry Fish of Carpinteria.
15. The Camp Meeting mentioned here was held in Tucker's Grove, Santa Barbara. The *Santa Barbara Daily Press* of Aug. 4, 1882, states, "The murmur of prayer and music of praise are growing louder and stronger . . ." The Rev. Bovard referred to was Marion M. Bovard, first president of the University of Southern California. During the early days of the University Mr. Faulkner was one of its strongest boosters.
16. Joseph Sexton founded this nursery in the Goleta area in 1868.
17. He refers to the contract for building the first Methodist Church in Santa Paula.
18. The Home Protection Society was a temperance organization.
19. The dedication was for the new Methodist Church building.



# Early Promotional Publications

By CHAS. F. OUTLAND

Long before the various Chambers of Commerce of the county came into being there were zealous citizens of a progressive nature who saw to it that Ventura County was being favorably presented to potential settlers. The publications that were put out between 1880 and 1900 to entice newcomers to the region vary from short pamphlets to a credible book of some 190 pages, but in general they all followed a similar pattern. First there was a description of the climate, timber, available water, etc. Then followed a none too modest account of the versatility of the soil and the high productivity of the many crops that could be raised. Often the price of land and where available was given in the text as well as in advertisements at the beginning and end of the pamphlet or book.

Most of these publications have become quite scarce, due in part to the flimsy manner by which they were bound. Since the primary purpose for their existence was to promote emigration to this region, it can be assumed that most copies were sent outside the county to the East and Midwest where they have long since been reduced to ashes. The list given here constitutes the books and pamphlets of this type on record, but there were undoubtedly others that have been lost or forgotten.

*Pen Pictures of Ventura County, California. Its Beauties, Resources, and Capacities.* San Buenaventura, Calif., Free Press Printing Office. 1880. 26 pp.

The copy at the Pioneer Museum has a notation in pencil stating that this work was written by Howard Bledsoe. The style would indicate that Bledsoe had a strong assist from E. M. Sheridan. This is the earliest publication of this type concerning Ventura County of which there is any record. However, it would not be too surprising to have an earlier one turn up somewhere. San Buenaventura had a printing press for nine years prior to the appearance of this pamphlet and there was no lack of ardent boosters to sponsor a "come-on" brochure of this nature.

*Homes, Health and Pleasure in Southern California. Ventura County Ed.* By Newton H. Chittenden. San Buenaventura, Calif., 1883. 45 pp.

The same author published a similar work on Santa Barbara County in 1881.

*Ventura County, California. Its Resources, Etc., Etc.* San Buenaventura; Free Press Printing House, Bowers & Son, Proprietors. 1885. 39 pp.

No credit is given for authorship in this pamphlet, but there can be little doubt that Stephen Bowers, A. M., Ph.D., was the actual writer as well as the publisher. The only question is why Bowers, who was never averse to seeing his name in print in the most flamboyant style, should have neglected to take credit for writing this one. It is one of the best pamphlets of its kind that we have seen.

*Ventura Development Association Pub. Ventura County* [S. F., Bancroft Co. 1888?] 48 pp.

*Ventura County Resources.* San Buenaventura, Calif. [188?] 11 pp., map.

*Ventura Weekly Democrat, Souvenir Edition.* John McGonigle, Editor and Proprietor, Ventura County, California. 1896.

There were a number of these souvenir editions printed about this time. Their purpose, like the pamphlets already noted, was purely promotional. They were usually printed on a glossy paper stock with no cover of any kind other than the text paper itself. As a consequence few of them have survived.

*Homeseekers and Tourists' Guide and Ventura County Directory. Illustrated.* 1898-99. Ventura, Calif., Jan. 28, 1898. P. Milliken, Compiler. California Directory Co., Publishers. Ventura Free Press, Printers.

Not listed in *California Local History, a Centennial Bibliography*. This is rather strange as the book does not appear to be as scarce as its predecessors, being bound with hard covers and several copies being known to exist in the county. There are extensive advertisements at the front and back of the book, some of which are usually missing. The writer has examined a number of copies, all of which are incomplete. The Pioneer Museum copy ends at page 187, with several pages obviously torn out. The book is by far the best of its type and its Directory makes it useful even today.

*Santa Paula Chronicle, Souvenir Edition.* July 1899. 30 pp.

This is the best issue of the *Chronicle* ever published. It is profusely illustrated and has many splendid articles dealing with the people and activities of the period. Although scarce, it is a fine source record of historical material that would otherwise be unavailable.



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Reserved for business firms that are sustaining members of the Historical Society, and that have been serving the people of Ventura County for 50 years or more.

*Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Co.* Organized on April 4, 1898 with E. P. Foster, president, N. W. Blanchard, vice president, and Charles Barnard, secretary. For over 57 years this old Ventura County business firm has faithfully followed the high standards set by its pioneer organizers.

*Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association.* Organized in April 1890 as the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association with J. R. Hall, president, Caspar Taylor, vice-president, and H. H. Youngken, secretary. For 65 years this organization has served the interests of home owners and builders, as well as those of the investor.

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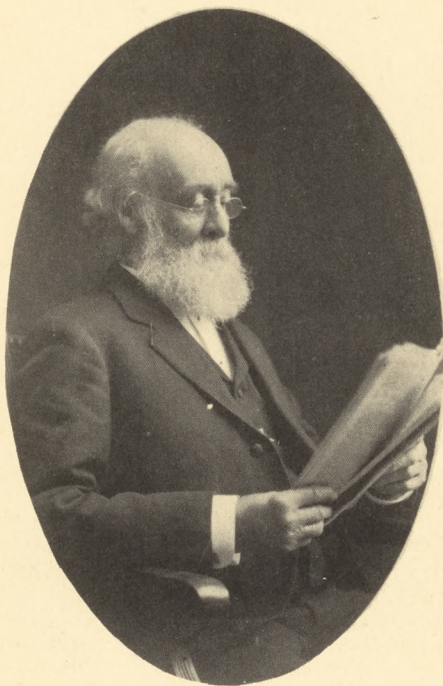
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*The*  
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*QUARTERLY*



John J. Ricker

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MAIN STREET GUN PLAY  
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## History and the County Line

The gathering of material to print in a local historical publication, while presenting problems, gives a clear insight into the nature of history itself. It would be convenient if the editor could meet his counterpart from Santa Barbara County, shake hands at Rincon Creek, and say, "This is where your history stops and ours begins." Unfortunately, history cannot be contained within the arbitrary boundaries drawn by men. On the contrary it has the fascinating, though untidy, habit of spilling out on all sides and flowing endlessly for infinite distances. It would be futile to attempt to study the history of Ventura County without possessing a working knowledge of California history; and to understand the full significance of the latter it would be necessary to be familiar to some extent with the history of Spain and Mexico, the American Southwest, the Plains and Rockies, and the motivating forces behind the westward expansionist movement. The Russians enter the picture from the north, and the intrigues and quarrels of Europe form the foundations for many of the most interesting developments in California history. Thus, if carried to the ultimate degree, the whole story of mankind becomes woven together in one intricate and inseparable pattern.

If, then, the knowledge of the broader historical picture is essential to complete comprehension of the local, how equally important is understanding the significance of local history in its contribution to the whole. The county, township, precinct, family, and finally the individual are the feeder roots which nourish the tree that is the Story of Man. It is here at the roots that local historical societies have the opportunity to contribute to the larger story. Individually the contribution may be small; collectively they supply the vigor that sustains the life of the tree.

# Iowa to Ventura County By Covered Wagon

From Experiences In the Life of John J. Ricker

As told to Ella Ricker Lewis in 1905

I had been to California before(1) and the climatic conditions in the east never suited me. I was discontented all the time, wanting to return to California. My wife approving of the plan, on the 17th day of March, 1866 we said goodbye to our neighbors and friends and started out once more. Our outfit consisted of three wagons, eight oxen, two mules, five horses, four cows, myself and my wife with five little girls, and four men. Two neighbor families traveled with us the first day in a down-pour of rain to see us off. In the morning they returned while we continued on to find a new home farther west. The next night was a repetition of the one just past. We were camped on the banks of a small stream and it rained two or three days, swelling it to overflowing, and making it impossible to travel. We were quite uncomfortable, but everyone was cheerful saying, "We expected to see this."

Here we were joined by another family, and continued to pick them up along the way until we arrived at the Missouri River at Council Bluffs. By this time we had a good party. It being early in the season and the winter having been one of deep snow, all the rivers and creeks were swollen full. Large rivers that had a good bridge stood in the middle of a river a mile and three quarters wide. If there was a ferry boat it had not yet been chopped out of the ice. It caused considerable danger and delay. We arrived at Council Bluffs about the tenth of May. Here we spent several days laying in provisions, making repairs and getting ready for the final start.

We crossed the Missouri River on the thirteenth of May and organized into a train. We chose a man by the name of Bailey as Captain(2). He was a typical western mountaineer, having spent several years in the mountains and plains as a freighter and trader. A man of energy, activity and executive ability. On my first meeting with him he took a comprehensive look at me that seemed to take in all dimensions, then looked at my outfit which he seemed to approve of and well pleased with every detail. He was a man almost the reverse of myself. Large, tall and active; always ready to go ahead. When he organized the train he put my outfit next to his bringing our families together. He had his wife with him, her mother and two brothers. Of his own he had three heavy freight wagons loaded with merchandise and another wagon filled for his wife's use. Our train consisted of forty-four wagons, about eight hundred head of stock and about two hundred people, all families. They came from Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Missouri, Alabama and Mississippi.





The Ricker Girls, 1921. Left to right: Eva Nideffer, Etta, Ida Alvord, Ella Lewis and Dora Todd.

Upon arriving at Fort Laramie the Colonel in command, after examining our outfit as to arms, ammunition, etc., decided that we were able to take care of ourselves, and let us pass if we would stay together. He warned us not to let anyone separate. The Colonel told us that the government was trying to get all the Indians to assemble at the fort and make a treaty. He told us of a new route called Bridger's Cutoff which would be much shorter and better in many respects than the other, but the Indians had always refused to let any white people go through. Two years before General Connor and a small army, with some Montana freighters, had punished the Indians very badly(3). We decided to go that way and eighty-five miles above Fort Laramie we left the way to South Pass and took the Bridger's Cutoff, traveling five hundred and fifty miles right along the base of the mountains, over fine grassy land and comparatively smooth road(4). About every half day we crossed a large creek that came from the mountainous canyons. Some were so deep and swift that we had to lash two logs under the wagon beds and fasten the whole thing down securely. We put the women and children into the wagon as none wanted a return ticket. Two men on horseback, with ropes from their saddles to the leader heads and men upon other horses with whips and shouts on the downstream side, would keep the team square across the river. Then the logs would be unfastened and towed back to be used on other wagons. One of my horses alone was responsible for the return of the logs in every case. It required a half a day or more to make one of



these crossings with the whole train. While the women were waiting they employed their time by getting dinner. On each side a meal was served so when we were all together again we would be ready to go on. The children would catch trout out of the clear, cold water and they surely were good to eat.

Thus we traveled along until we crossed the Big Horn River. We crossed it at the mouth of the canyon where it comes out of the mountains, fifteen miles below where some ten years later Custer fought the Indians for the last time. It took us two weeks to cross this one river with thirteen hundred wild Arapahoe Indians amongst us all the time. Our men would almost all be in the river with the stock or on the opposite side. The women and children and some of the wagons and all that gang of red men on the other side(5). They never molested anything, however, except to beg. Indians always beg for anything in sight. One very large fellow, calling himself "Big Chief Black Bear," seemed to fall in love with my wife. She was fair of complexion, with an abundance of blond hair that seemed to please him wonderfully. The only word of English any of them knew or could use was "swap." One day he brought me two young Indian women, rather good looking as Indians go. Pointing to them then to mother he said, "Swap, swap?" However, it wasn't my bargain day and I declined to do business with him, very much to his disgust, so we compromised by my giving him a pocket knife and he left leading his squaws away.

The last two days we were at work there, there came along a merchant from Chicago with fifteen heavy freight wagons loaded with merchandise for Montana. Six fine mules to each wagon. He was accompanied by his wife, young daughter and three little girls. During our last day they got fifteen mules and five wagons across. We finished at dark that night. The next morning all those Indians packed up and started for Fort Laramie. At noon we left going our way. The next morning between daylight and sunrise some Indians came back and stole all of the mules that were on that side of the river. He had to go on four hundred miles up into Montana to get teams to haul his wagons, while his family waited there with the wagons.

We continued on until we came to the Yellowstone River, which was another large and deep one. A wealthy Frenchman named Bozeman, who had large interests in Montana and knew the value of immigration, built a ferry boat there and left two men to run it. He charged six dollars a wagon for all who were able to pay. Those who were out of money and were unable to pay, "take them across anyway." Some availed themselves of the opportunity.

After crossing the Yellowstone we traveled up the north side through a fine country for about one hundred and fifty miles to the Gallatin Valley. I suppose it is now Yellowstone Park. Here Bozeman had started a trading station calling it Bozeman City. Down the



valley quite a number of farmers were raising vegetables for the mines. Here we parted with all the people who were going to Helena or mining locally. Here we crossed the Gallatin, a swift dangerous stream on account of the boulders in the bed. Then came the Jefferson and the Madison, the three uniting to form the Missouri.

Soon we entered the mountains again and continued to Virginia City, the place where gold was first found in Montana and which had been a very rich camp. Here the rest stopped, Bailey and the other freighter; and I was left with my family to proceed alone. We took the Salt Lake stage and freight road down Alder Creek a day and a half. Then we turned into Beaverhead Canyon for about a days travel which brought us to a small stream of clear cold water. One more days travel and we began to find carcasses of oxen along the stream. About four hundred head of oxen up to the head of the canyon and as many more on the other side. A whole freight train having perished in a blizzard the winter before.

After traveling about one hundred miles towards Salt Lake City from Virginia City we came out onto a large level plain covered with sage brush and grease wood and nothing else. Our road turned towards the mountains and we kept along the edge of the foothills which bordered this plain on the north. Here we found a mountain waif in the shape of a miner who had probably been in every mining district from the Gulf of Mexico to Alaska. His only claim to this world consisted of an Indian pony, a good Colts revolver, a rude home made saddle, a few tattered blankets, an old army over-coat, a very good violin, but not a mouthful to eat. From the back of his pony he could shoot anything that had either wings or feet, but there were neither birds or rabbits on that whole plain. He came to us and said that his home was in Oregon where he wanted to go. He said he was a good guide, a good cook and would do housework if we would take him along and give him something to eat. He stayed with us until we reached Portland and made good all that he said.

Our way through here for a hundred and fifty miles had never had a wagon track over it, trails for horseback and pack animals only(6). Every day we met many miners going prospecting or going from one camp to another as the diggings became worked out. They were all going one way. None the way we were. Every night there would be some and frequently as many as twenty or more camped at the same place we were. As soon as supper was over they would gather around our camp fire to ask questions about "back in the States." To them it was a pleasure to see a woman and children.

At this point in father's story he became tired and we stopped to rest for awhile but never continued. Now 40 years later, I have been requested and urged to finish it according to my recollections of his rehearsals of episodes and my own memory after we reached Santa Clara Valley, "the end of the trail."



They(7) reached Oregon in October 1866 and found a camp on the Columbia River at the present site of Portland. Here a tragedy resulting in the death of one of the little girls befell them, necessitating a stay there. Father rented land and remained a year. Then on account of climatic conditions and his original desire to live in California, they started on again arriving at Benicia, Tehama County in the summer. He stopped again, working with his stock through the harvest. Yet this was not the California he had dreamed of, and since he had heard of a place called Los Angeles, once more they were on the move to the south hoping to find a more pleasant climate and place to live.

After many weeks of "prospecting" we came to Santa Barbara County. Coming over San Marcos grade to reach Santa Barbara night came on and owing to a steep, rocky, crooked roadpath, it was safer to have a guide so Ida, who had much experience on the road in a covered wagon since leaving Iowa, was chosen to go ahead with a lantern to guide father and the team down the grade and we reached the end in safety. In a few days we reached Mission San Buenaventura situated at the west end of the fertile valley of the Santa Clara of the South, in 1869, where a few other immigrants had chosen to make their homes.

We drove east up the valley stopping from time to time to talk with settlers. One of these was M.de L. Todd who had settled here a few months before on the very same land owned and still occupied 78 years later by his heirs. On this particular afternoon Mr. Todd was standing in his doorway when he heard a wagon traveling by. He saw that we were new in the valley looking for a place to settle, so at once became interested and friendly. The road was dry and dusty, the children tired and cross and began teasing for a drink of water. Father told us we could go and ask "that man" for water. He could see that he was a kind man.

Refreshed by water and conversation we again began our search. Hoping to find a sheltered spot to once again pitch camp we turned to Santa Paula Canyon and soon found the oak grove which is now Mill Park and camped.

The next afternoon a man came into our camp returning from gathering a load of wood further up the canyon. He sat down upon the wagon tongue and began visiting with mother and father. Ida was cooking supper over the camp fire and because the smoke blew in her face and a lot of other disadvantages confronted her, she became annoyed and cross when he started teasing her about her "cook-stove." Thus began a pioneer friendship which resulted in the marriage of our oldest sister Dora and Marcus de Lafayette Todd on January 22, 1871.

While we were still camped at the oak grove in the canyon and trying to decide whether to go further east and south to Los Angeles or stay in this valley, Mother, who had become very tired and discouraged, suggested tossing a coin to decide the question. The result





Mrs. John J. Ricker

was that we stay. Land for rent was at that time available and father rented what was then known as the Orchard Ranch—now the Edwards property. I do not know how long we lived there, but we moved to Saticoy onto the land which is now the Saticoy Country Club.

Then back to Briggs district and in 1877 found a larger tract of land east of Santa Paula on the More ranch which father rented and planted to small beans.

While there a friend of father and mother who came from Oregon with us and stopped in Santa Maria Valley (M. P. Nicholson) had become manager of the San Francisco Rancho owned by H. M. Newhall, adjacent to the Camulos. He came and told father that they needed him and his horses to help out there. At this time it didn't seem to make much difference where we were, so we moved again to Newhall Ranch. In the meantime Ida had married Julius Alvord in 1879, and Eva "followed suit" and became Mrs. Jacob Nideffer (8) in 1883, so that Etta and I were the only "Ricker girls" left.

After some time on the Newhall father, as well as mother, grew tired of being unsettled for so many years and, having a chance to buy a place in Santa Clara Valley where we originally settled, bought the Charley O'Hara place on Foothill Road; set it out to apricot and walnut trees, and prepared to live there the rest of our days—which we did until sickness made it advisable and necessary to make one more change.

Father sold our Foothill home, which we all loved, to Ray C. Joy and we bought and moved into the home on North Mill Street still owned and occupied by the last survivor of the Ricker family.

From 1869 to 1873 we were living in Santa Barbara County. On March 22, 1872—"The County of Ventura was approved and ordained to be in force, on and after January 1, 1873," and father was elected one of the first Justices of the Peace at the first election, afterward serving on the Board of Supervisors.

Those were pioneer days and although I was a little girl I distinctly remember our life through those times. Father was always a lover of horses and owned a good team—even descendants of those which brought the family across the plains from Iowa.

The valley was productive and the only way of shipping was by steamer from Ventura and Hueneme wharves. The grain crops, hogs and oil had to be freighted by team and wagon to the ports. Father's outfit consisted of six and sometimes eight horses and two wagons fastened together. He drove with a single or jerk line. His trips took three days for the round-trip from Sespe Canyon for barrels of oil to Ventura, and from Simi Valley for grain to Hueneme. On one occasion, I remember too well, he was very late getting home. We used to listen for the sound of the wagons on the road; we could hear them long before he reached home. Mother had waited and kept supper warm for him until almost morning. He cared for the team and came in, but could eat nothing. It was a long time before he could tell us that his fine chestnut stallion, Don, which worked as a wheel-horse in the freight team, had caught his foot in a loose telegraph wire in the road near Saticoy, broken his leg and had to be shot. If father had broken his own leg he could not have looked nor felt worse.

Another experience which greatly impressed my young mind occurred while he was still in the freight business. One moonlight night when he was crossing the Ellsworth Barranca, very late, he said he laid down in the bottom of the wagon with his jerk-line in his hand. All at once the team stopped. He got to his feet and saw several men on horseback peering into the wagon. When they saw him one of the riders called to the others, "This is not our man." Father spoke to his leader, whose name was "Fred." The horse immediately responded and without any further salutations the robbers dashed away. It was when Vasques, the outlaw, was abroad in the land and father said he was very glad that he was not their man (9).

One of the necessary customs of the Valley at that time was hauling water in barrels from the Santa Clara River. One of my earliest recollections is going with father to get the water. Etta and I would help him dip the water by buckets into the barrels on the wagon. For us it was fun, but for poor tired father it was only a duty and a necessity.

Then there were the early school days in the valley, beginning at Saticoy. Ida, Eva, and Etta attended there. Then the first school term in Briggs district held in the teacher's home, which was down by the river and now owned, I think, by Mr. Arthur Walter. Etta and I rode



horseback to Live Oak in Wheeler Canyon; afterwards to Santa Paula, Santa Clara, and finishing up in Ventura.

This is particularly the story of Father's life, but since we were all involved I have included the rest of us. No story concerning him, however, would be complete without mentioning some of his characteristics. He was always a great reader, and interested in the affairs of government. When in his declining years he became blind and could not read for himself, it was the pleasure of Etta and myself to read aloud to him the newspapers. His first request was: "What is Congress doing?" He was one of the organizers of the First Universalist Church of Santa Paula, one of the founders of the Society of Ventura County Pioneers, and was always helpful in the welfare of the public. He was a patient, sympathetic and indulgent father, with the interest of his family ever at heart.

In rehearsing some of the happenings of this story to me he said, "Your mother has always been a great help mate to me, and although our life together has been hard sometimes and often troubled, she has never once said, 'Let's turn back.'" Our dear mother at the age of 82 preceeded him in death by only five months, a loss which he could not withstand. On April 12, 1912 he passed away in Los Angeles where he was receiving treatment for his eyes. The end of a useful and courageous life.

February 17, 1948

E.R.L.

#### NOTES

1. Mr. Ricker came around the Horn to California in the bark Lennark in 1849. After mining for a year he returned to Boston and was married. He left almost immediately with his bride for Iowa where he engaged in farming until 1866. This portion of the Ricker narrative has been omitted here, along with several Indian incidents on the Plains, due to lack of space.

2. The editor has been unable to obtain specific information on Bailey. He may be the same man who is sometimes reputed to have traveled part way with John (Portugee) Phillips on his famous ride to Fort Laramie, following the so-called Fetterman Massacre.

3. General Connor was punished as badly as the Indians and was relieved of his command following the abandonment of the Powder River Expedition in 1865, not 1864 as Ricker states.

4. The description given here more nearly fits the Bozeman Trail than the route advocated by Bridger.

5. This statement is incompatible with the known facts for this region in 1866. No competent guide would have been guilty of having all the men in the river or on the opposite bank while the women and children were among "thirteen hundred wild Arapahoes."

6. The Rickers appear to have left the regular stage road from Virginia City to Salt Lake City.

7. Mrs. Lewis, the narrator, was born after the family reached Oregon, hence the use of the third person, plural here.

8. Jacob Nideffer was the son of John Nidever and a nephew of Capt. George Nidever. Bancroft cites both spellings, but no logical reason can be offered as to why the difference exists in the family.

9. Vasquez had relatives in the region and is reputed to have refrained from his nefarious operations in Ventura County for that reason. Descendants are reputed to speak of "Uncle Tiburcio" with pride today.



## Main Street Gun Play

In the November issue of the *Quarterly* a letter from N. C. Bledsoe to H. H. Elkins was published under the title "Oldtimers." Bledsoe in his letter dealt at some length with several of the better known gunmen and shooting episodes in the County's past. One such foray was conspicuous by its absence, probably because Bledsoe, himself, was on the receiving end of the lead. The incident has little historic value but, combined with the version of the affair that Dr. Bard was so fond of telling, it is of more than passing interest. As usual in such cases the best source of information is in the contemporary newspapers. The *Ventura Signal* for Nov. 20, 1880 states:

"Much excitement was caused in town Thursday by the report that N. C. Bledsoe, one of our young lawyers, had been shot by Jas. Daly, a prominent lumber dealer and an ex-Supervisor for the township. Many conflicting stories were in circulation and it was impossible to obtain a correct report on the affair. The fracas occurred about 3 o'clock in front of Kaiser's butcher shop and a reporter called on Mr. Kaiser as probably being the party who could give the most correct version.

"Mr. Kaiser's story is as follows: He said he was standing in the door of his shop talking to Mr. Daly on some business matter, when Jas. Bledsoe, a brother of N. C. Bledsoe, approached from the direction of the Revere House and stopped, and turning round asked if this was Mr. Daly. Mr. Daly informed him that that was his name, whereupon Jas. Bledsoe told him that he wanted him to apologize to his brother N. C. Bledsoe, for something he, Daly, had said to him. Mr. Daly informed him that he had said nothing about his brother, when Jas. Bledsoe informed him that he had and could prove it. Mr. Daly then told him to bring his proof and he would apologize if any apology was necessary. Mr. Bledsoe then wanted him to go with him to his brother, which Mr. Daly would not do. Hot words arose and Mr. Bledsoe struck, or struck at, Mr. Daly at which time Mr. Kaiser stepped between them and separated them, pushing Bledsoe out on the sidewalk and Mr. Daly inside his shop. Mr. Kaiser then heard Daly warn young Bledsoe that if he did not keep away he would get hurt, and turning saw that Daly had a pistol in his hand. Mr. Kaiser then told Daly he did not want any shooting around there and went out on the sidewalk with Mr. Daly, the latter still having his pistol in his hand. At sight of the pistol, Mr. Bledsoe stood back but facing Daly. Mr. Daly was facing down the street in the direction from which Bledsoe had come, and at that moment Mr. N. C. Bledsoe, who had stopped down the street, came up. Just as he got to Jas. Bledsoe, the latter turned and saw him. The two Bledsoes then started toward Daly, Mr. N. C. Bledsoe having a pistol in his hand. Mr. Daly stepped off the sidewalk and as the Bledsoes came up, and the distance of about fifteen paces, he fired.



The ball took effect in the left forearm of N. C. Bledsoe. It was not known then that anyone was shot as nothing was said of it. After Daly shot, Jas. Bledsoe ran toward him and tried to wrest the pistol from him and the two scuffled toward the middle of the street, N. C. Bledsoe running around them, pistol in hand. Both Bledsoe and Daly had hold of the latter's pistol, which was finally given up to Mr. Sheldon.

"That is the story as told by a disinterested eye-witness and is as correct as can possibly be ascertained. The foundation of the affair is on account of some legal business between Daly and N. C. Bledsoe, the latter having acted as attorney for Daly for some time.

"After it was found that Bledsoe was shot, he was taken into the back room of the Pioneer Drug Store and Dr. Simms was called in. The doctor extracted the ball from the back part of Bledsoe's arm and it was shown to be jagged and somewhat smashed, showing that a bone had been struck or grazed. Mr. Bledsoe was taken to his home where, at last accounts he was getting on quite well."

While Bledsoe was being treated in the Pioneer Drug Store Dr. Bard appeared upon the scene and apparently went to see if he could be of any assistance in treating Bledsoe. Bard, in telling the story, claimed that while the arm wound was rather bloody and messy and undoubtedly painful, it was really not at all serious. However, it was impossible for either doctor to convince Bledsoe that he was not a mortally wounded man breathing his last breath of earthly air. Turning to Bard with a maudlin theatrical manner the injured man said weakly, "Doctor, I have only one request to make. Tell Mother I died like a Bledsoe!!"

The seriousness of Bledsoe's wound may be deduced from the fact that his letter to Elkins on the oldtimers of the Santa Clara Valley was dated June 8, 1928, almost half a century after being shot on Ventura's Main Street by Daly.

The story of Bledsoe's "last moments" may be apocryphal, although it was one of Bard's favorite stories and he is usually given credit for receiving Bledsoe's "last request."

# History of the Conejo Ranch

By JOE RUSSELL

El Conejo is the Spanish word for cottontail rabbit. It is also the name of the Spanish grant which starts at the top of the Conejo Grade and extends easterly into Los Angeles County. It is bounded on the north by Rancho Simi and Las Posas and on the south by the Santa Monica Mountains.

At one time I have heard that the land here was valued equally with that in the Santa Clara Valley. But that was in the days before the lima bean, citrus fruits and irrigation water. Then they wanted burr-clover and alfalfa for cattle. Grain was also raised. But in the Santa Clara what at night was a field of barley was sometimes in the morning a field of drifting sand with no barley in sight. There was no sand to drift in the Conejo. However, water and windbreaks have changed the Santa Clara. Still the Conejo has its compensations. It has fine oak trees, beautiful mountains and a very good climate. Mr. R. O. Hunt learned this many years ago when he said, "The Conejo is no great shucks of a place to make money, but it is a nice place to live." Now the week-enders and the people who wish country estates have discovered this too.

The Rancho was granted in 1802-1803 by Gov. Arrilaga to Ygnacio Rodriguez and Jose Polanco, and the Jose Polanco area was granted by Gov. De Soto to Jose de la Guerra in 1822. De la Guerra died in 1858 and his wife in 1843. We are apt to say that these grants came directly from the King of Spain but, as a matter of fact, they came from the governors of California and were usually, if not always, for services rendered. Jose de la Guerra must have rendered considerable service to the government of Mexico or California because he not only was given the Conejo grant in Ventura County but also the Simi, the Tapo and the Los Posas. He had several large grants in Santa Barbara County, also.

The Conejo had 48,178 acres and when de la Guerra died he willed his property to his nine children. In 1872 the ranch passed into the hands of James Edwards of Santa Barbara. In 1873 there was a deed recorded from the United States government to the de la Guerras. This deed was undoubtedly for the purpose of validating the Mexican title by the United States. After California was ceded to the United States, Congress passed an act by which the Mexican titles could be validated.

Howard W. Mills is listed as owner of an undivided one-half interest with Edwards and later he sold for a consideration of approximately \$5,000 one-eighth of a one-half undivided interest or something like \$1.50 per acre. But don't get excited; sheep may have been worth from 25¢ to \$1.50 per head and cattle from \$7.00 to \$15.00 per head and probably a lot of them dying in a drought.



After this the ranch must have been divided because Howard Mill's name on the map is on specified plots of land. Soon after in the Potrero, which was listed as Howard Mills property, Olney Whiteside and Dan Reilly bought about 3,000 acres and Joseph Howard bought what we have always called the Potrero Rancho, consisting of about 8,000 acres. He sold to the Banning Company. Their intention was to make a resort there, and in 1889 they built what is known as the "Little Dam." However, they later bought Santa Catalina Island and the Potrero did not become a resort at that time. About 1889 F. W. Matheissen Jr. bought it and about 1905 F. W. Matheissen Sr. built the big dam and we now have Lake Sherwood there, quite a playground for worn out city folks. There are also numerous country homes and estates there which could not have been built with money made farming in the Conejo.

Prior to 1880 most of the names which appear in the record were not those of the people who moved into the valley to make their homes and to ranch for a living. However, along about that time the men who wished to make their homes here came. Samuel Hill bought the Santa Rosa Ranch. In 1881 John and Caspar Borchard each bought 4,000 acres. A. D. Russell and H. M. Russell bought 6,000. Newbury bought 2,000 and sold shortly to Thomas Gormly who sold to Greene Crowley. This is the present site of Thousand Oaks.

A. D. Russell was my father and he bought the part of the Conejo known as the Triunfo Ranch. I have heard him tell of how coming down on the stage to buy it he sat next to a rather well dressed and talkative gentleman. This man was from San Francisco and a bank of that city owned the Triunfo. Not thinking that the man sitting next to him could be a competitive buyer he told my father that he was on his way to buy a tract of land which he planned to resell.

My father left the stage at Ventura. He went to a livery stable and asked for the best horse that they had. The Triunfo Ranch had the adobe house that was the original headquarters for the de la Guerras and the agent was supposed to be there. This agent was John Gries, a man well known and frequently mentioned in early California history. He was about six feet, six inches tall and lean. He had a General Grant beard untrimmed. When my father arrived his team was hitched to a buckboard and tied to the fence. When my father told him why he had come horse back, Jake said the other fellow was a real estate man and that he would rather my father have the ranch.

He said, "Get in and I will show you your money's worth in 20 minutes." He started the horses out on a keen run, my father said, and there were no roads but plenty of rocks and bumps to which Jake paid very little attention. I think my father thought he might not get back to buy the place. However, they drew up at the house just as the stage came in sight. My father brought out a \$20 gold piece and said, "I'll take it." When the talkative gentleman stepped out to tell John Gries who he was, Jake said, "I have just sold it."





Newbury Park's first mail carrier in front of the "Big Hotel."

After my father bought the Triunfo Ranch he changed the road that went through the valley and ran it along the foothills. The stage station run by the Cutlers was then abandoned.

A Mr. Philbrook then moved his apiary from the Simi and built a stage coach station about one and one-half miles directly north of where I now live. Sometime in 1876, what was always referred to as the "Big Hotel" was built. It is still there, owned by Simon Hays. Gene Philbrook has told me that these three places were all in competition. The Vejar and the Big Hotel served liquor while the Philbrooks' place did not. As things sometimes got pretty rough in the other places, they picked up considerable business for this reason.

The Coast Stage Lines came through originally and they used what is now part of the Moorpark Road and came into the Santa



Rosa Valley over the Butterfield Grade west of the Norwegian Grade. We had the "long" and "short" grade to get to the Santa Clara Valley. The long grade was and still is used with some realignment at the south side of the Conejo Valley, while what was known as the short grade was on the north side. However, it was really not a grade—you locked your wheels with a chain or tied a big limb of a tree behind the rig and went to the bottom of the canyon.

I never remembered any work being done on the roads by the county in early years. There was a stump in the road near the furniture store now in Thousand Oaks that must have been there for years. Sulky carts were widely used and as they were about as hard to ride as a bucking horse numerous people were thrown by hitting this stump. It stayed there even after several people were thrown out and had broken ribs.

In 1887 the railroad from Saugus was built to Santa Barbara and this was the beginning of the end for the stage stations. I have heard that the owner of the Big Hotel, Mr. Hamill, prophesied that the country would go to the dogs because all the stage stations would be closed if the railroad kept on.

After the coast line railroad came through Camarillo the Conejo people wanted a road there. By that time the voters had become road conscious and roads, as now, were part of the political candidates' platform. So some money was appropriated for the grade. It was not enough, however, and the contractor went broke; so we in the Conejo raised \$1,800 to make up the deficit and had the first Conejo Grade.

The mail came on the stages when they ran, but when the railroad came through we had a mail carrier who, I think, brought the mail once a week from Montalvo or Saticoy.

The original grant owners usually ran their lines from point to point taking in as little of the brush land as possible but tried to get in all the valley lands. Their boundary marks might be a certain huge tree or a house, etc. There was at one time an adobe house very near the line of the Conejo grant. As long as I knew it, however, it was nothing but a mound of dirt, although there was an adobe house well up in my father's land. This caused some people to assume that the grant line was near it, and several times homesteaders located there as there was government land near the adobe mound.

One morning a very meek looking man and a very aggressive woman came to the house and informed us (that is, the woman did) that they had taken up all the land below the old adobe. They would be very easy on us, she said. We would not have to hurry getting the cattle off or giving possession. In the meantime they were already in the house at the bee camp and would continue to live there. My father merely said that the land was not much good anyway and if it was not his he did not want it. This appeared to disappoint her as she seemed to be looking for an argument of some kind. However, they left after some time.



In about a week a man came and said he was looking for Mr. Russell. I said, "My name is Russell." But he said that he was looking for the elder Russell. He maintained a very secretive air and said he would wait until my father returned. As it was late in the afternoon when my father arrived the gentleman prepared to stay overnight. He was very silent about his business, but at the supper table he exploded his bombshell.

He said very aggressively, "Mr. Russell, I have been sent here to investigate you on a charge of intimidating homesteaders. What did you say to Mrs. So and So?" My father said that he told her that if the land was not his she could have it, but it was his. He turned to me, "Did you threaten to shoot them?" he asked. I said no. "Did you have a rifle?" "No, but I had a rifle scabbard on my saddle." Then he said, "There is government land within twenty feet of the old adobe, but we will see in the morning."

In the morning he took a horse and investigated. When he came back he seemed mad, chagrined and disappointed. Mad because he had made a long trip for nothing. Chagrined because he had the wrong adobe and I am sure disappointed because he undoubtedly came thinking he would save some poor homesteader from injustice by a large land owner. However, he did mutter to himself, "Wait 'til I see that woman; she talked so much nobody else could get in a word edgewise."

What little irrigation we have came in rather recent years. There was a ditch, however, in Triunfo Canyon that started about a mile west of the Las Virgenes line and ran past the old adobe mound and extended about three miles east. There were a few old apple and pear trees in one spot, but outside of these there were no marks of irrigation that I have ever known about or anyone who knew who built the ditch or why.

The Conejo School was built about 1879 and has continued uninterruptedly since then, although there were times when we had great difficulty in keeping up our 5-plus average. The Timber School was opened some time in the late '80's after Casper Borchard Sr. had sold some land in small tracts to the Dunkards and this school has also run continuously since. It was at times most difficult for children to get to school in rainy weather and in bad weather the schools often closed so the absence of some pupils would not impair the 5-plus average.

I have heard many people talk of adobe mud, but I maintain that they really knew little about it until they had come in contact with ours. You could not plow it wet nor could you plow it dry. I have seen it roll up on wheels of a wagon until all four were locked and sliding like a sled. Some of the children who walked to school would at times get so firmly bogged down that they would have to leave their rubber boots and proceed without them. I am sure that every old timer here is profoundly grateful for paved roads and graveled ones, also.

The duties of the clerk of the board of school trustees were numerous. He generally was supposed to do minor repairs on the school building; to see that the teacher got from her home to the school at



the beginning of the school term; that she got back and forth for Christmas and spring vacations and the end of the school term; and find her a place to board, room, etc.

The name Newbury Park comes from the Newbury who owned the ranch where Thousand Oaks now is. The post office was moved from there to the Philbrooks station and when they left, a man by the name of Skelton kept it for some time. Later Mrs. R. O. Hunt kept it. She did not like the name of Timberville and so the name of Newbury Park moved with the office. After the railroad was completed we got our mail by star route, but we lived this side of the post office and had to go for ours. Now, of course, we get it every day delivered at our door.

The Edwards family kept between 7,000 and 8,000 acres of land and about 1890 sold some of it to what we always called the Norwegian Colony. The rest, between 5,000 and 6,000 acres, they sold to the Janss Investment Co. about 1916. Mr. O. D. Wadleigh leased this ranch over a period of 30 years and during all that time there was no written agreement between the two parties. I have heard that at the end of a dry year and a failure of crops Mr. Edwards would ask Wadleigh to come to Santa Barbara and after some conversation as to the kind of a year, he might remit a good portion of his rent.

I have often been asked about the cemetery on the Conejo. When my father first came here a man named Robinson, who had worked for him for some time, came with him. One night he killed himself. As there was no cemetery near he was buried there and after that people from some distance were also buried there.

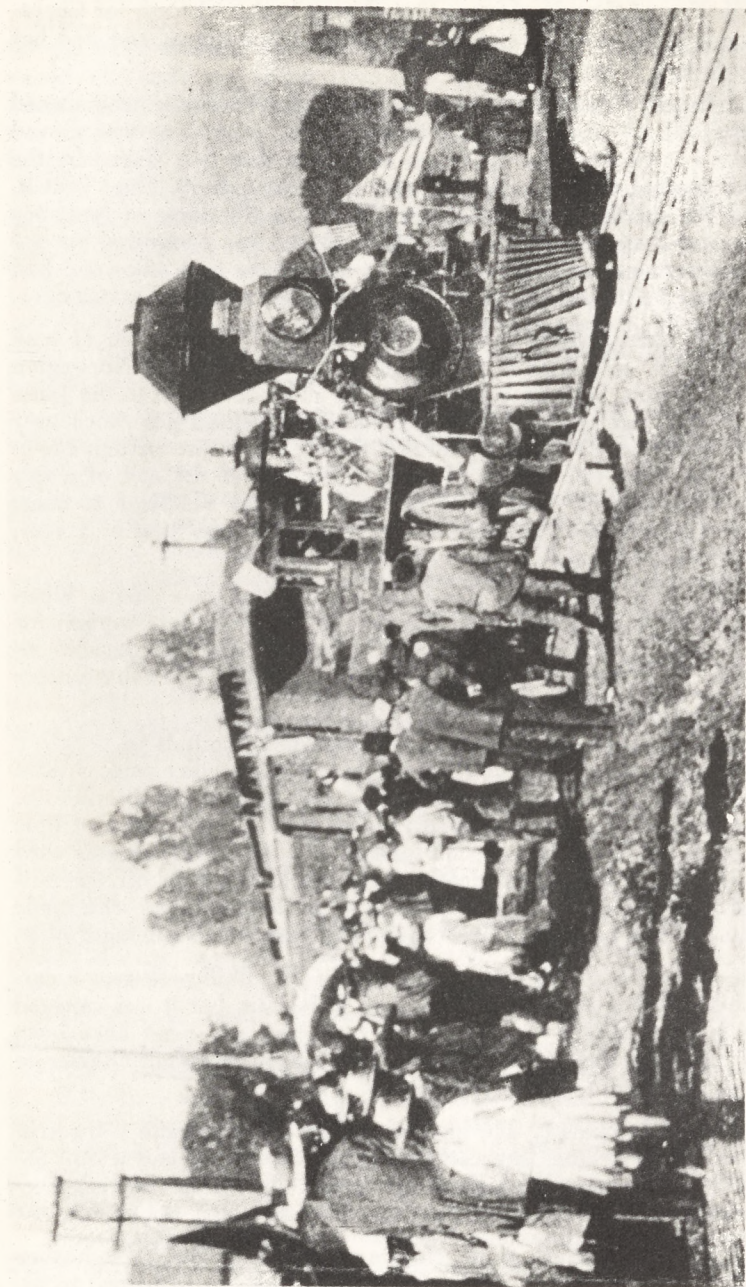
The thought of oil seems to have been on the minds of people a good many years back, for in 1864 the de la Guerra heirs made a lease to one Packard granting right to search for oil and other minerals. He later assigned this over to some Philadelphia interests. At that time they also had their trouble over oil leases, for in 1874 the Edwards sued the lessees for a quit claim deed. I do not know when oil was discovered in Ventura County but it seems to me that the man who made the lease in 1864 must have been one of the first to have thought of it.

One thing I remember hearing was that Mr. Philbrook sent a carload of sage honey to a commission firm in Boston, but it was rejected on the grounds that it was too white and clear and must have been mixed with sugar syrup to give it that appearance. Now, of course, no honey is supposed to equal sage honey.

So times do change. We have a summer colony, quite a town in Thousand Oaks, a rather large settlement at Ventu Park, and within the last years a very imposing school has been built by the Seventh Day Adventists. We have a little irrigation water also, but not much.

I am sure that those of us who have lived here always and taken California for granted are quite surprised at what has happened to us. I still think, as Mr. Hunt did, "The Conejo is a nice place to live—IF—."





First train to Santa Barbara.



# The First Southern Pacific Excursion Train In Ventura County, 1887

Written for the *Valley Headlight* Sept. 1, 1887

By HERB HENDERSON

The schedule time for the arrival of the excursion train at Santa Paula was 7:30 and long before that time those of Santa Paula who intended to honor Santa Barbara with their presence had gathered at the station. It was rumored that only the best looking of Santa Paula would be allowed to go which, of course, accounted for the collection of handsome ladies seated in the fine depot waiting room, and for the good looking gentlemen standing in the halls leading thereto or walking about on the platform.

Soon the train was seen approaching and all was excitement. The engine, decked with flags and glistening in the morning sun, made a fine appearance. It stopped at the big tank, replenishing its supply of water, and moved up to the station. After attending to some business the conductor called, "All aboard," followed by the ringing of the bell, the puff of the engine, the jarring of the cars, the swinging of hats and the waving of handkerchiefs, and we are away past fine residences, then through nicely tilled farms and beautiful orchards. We soon arrived at Saticoy. Only one was added to our list of excursionists there, and he was a visitor, which proved the oft-repeated assertion that there are no handsome people in Saticoy.

Yet we admire Saticoy, its rolling hills covered with fine groves and thrifty orchards, its expensive public school building, handsome church and commodious hotel; its three stores, market, fine residences and social inhabitants. As we passed beyond Saticoy we noted that the crops did not look so well. We were not surprised, for they have no water to irrigate with and are generally compelled to haul it for stock and house purposes. At about 8 o'clock we stopped at Ventura depot, took an expansive view of the grand Pacific, a sniff of the invigorating sea-breeze, wondering if that order about handsome people only being allowed to participate had not been reversed, as we did not see a single good-looking person get aboard, and on moving off we noticed that the streets were deserted.

From here, west all the way to Santa Barbara, the track follows the beach and runs very close to it. The scenery is magnificent; on the right are the high and abrupt mountains of the Coast Range which have been chiseled into to make room for the track. On the left is the deep, deep sea, with the blueness of the skies mirrored in the water and its ever rolling waves dashing on its shores. In the distance are the Channel Islands which break the mighty swells and smooth the intervening waters. About midway a ship is seen with sails all spread and adds much to the beauty of the scene.



We now arrive at another station where quite a group is added. This is the noted Carpinteria Valley which slopes to the sea. It was formerly covered with a heavy growth of timber, much of which has been removed and the land planted to beans, whose light green leaves contrast favorably with the dark foliage of the giant oaks.

We now pass Montecito, a very small and undulating valley; and on top of every little mound, of which there are many, a fine house is built amid the oaks, and from these a grand view of the ocean and mountains is had. We pass Ortega Hill and were surprised to hear that this was considered by Howard, Chief Engineer of the Atlantic and Pacific, as the most difficult route between New York and San Francisco. It is said in taking observations the surveyors were lowered by ropes to get into proper position.

We are now in sight of the far-famed Santa Barbara, of whose beauties I have heard since childhood. Its beautiful residences, its salubrious climate and refreshing breezes. Such were the things I had expected to see and feel, but as I trotted up and down State Street under a very small derby and a very hot sun, these fancies were soon dispelled. I inquired if that was an average day and they said it was an exception, possibly not one or two of the days in the year like it. I was at Santa Barbara once before; it was cold then and my teeth rattled like the bones in the hand of a professional. I managed to make the same inquiry, which elicited the same reply.

The procession was large and interesting, the dinner on Burton Mound was a very fine one, and near the tables was a fruit stand loaded with the choicest varieties of fruit and free to all. As I saw no orchard near Santa Barbara I was led to infer that the fruit had been shipped from Ventura County.

Five o'clock soon came around and though I intended to remain in Santa Barbara several days, I was tired enough to return so, with a quick step, with a complexion like a sun dried salmon, I made my way to the train.

We now moved along rather slowly on account of the newness of the track, and admired the scenery made more beautiful by the setting sun which dropped behind Point Concepcion.

We ran into the dark at Ventura (but no one was hurt) and saw nothing but the interior of the cars from there to Santa Paula where our trip came to an end.

Note: The writer of the above description was a well known citizen of this county for many years. He was prominent in Democratic politics and filled the post of County Supervisor beginning in 1906. In speaking of his birthplace his answer was invariably: "Born on Nigger Hill; went to school at Hangman's Gulch and spent my boyhood days in Placerville."

The Valley Headlight was an unusual hand written "publication" that flourished for some twelve or thirteen years in the Briggs district. Etta Ricker, whose father's story is told in this issue, was one of the "publishers." A weekly paper at first, it later became a bi-weekly. Only three or four copies are known to have survived.



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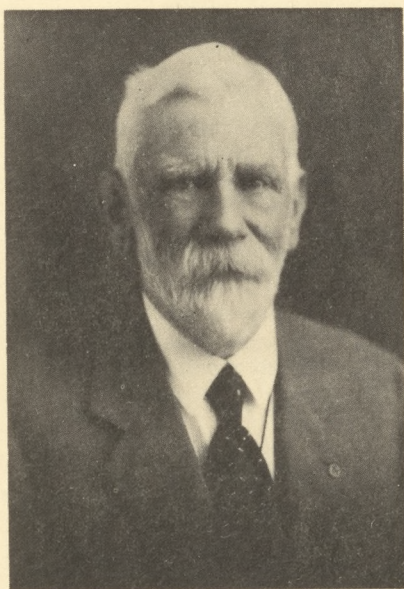
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*The*  
VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*QUARTERLY*



Eugene Preston Foster

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# *The Ventura County Historical Society*

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The Ventura County Historical Society's headquarters is the Pioneer Museum, 77 North California Street, Ventura, California. There are three classes of membership—active, \$5 per year, sustaining, \$25 per year and life, \$100.

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# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

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## The Museum

It is surprising the number of persons that ask the editor of the Quarterly, "Is there such a thing as a museum in Ventura County?" Some of the members of the Historical Society have even asked this question. We had always taken it more or less for granted that everyone, with the exception of newcomers, was familiar with the excellent Pioneer Museum on California Street. In view of the many inquiries received, the editor has asked Mr. J. H. Morrison, present Curator, to write a short history of the splendid collection of artifacts, curios, guns, antiques, relics, etc. that is known as the Ventura County Pioneer Museum. Jack, as usual, has come up with a first class story; not only on the Pioneer Museum, itself, but also on some of the private collections in the county that preceded it by many years. We have only one criticism to offer on Mr. Morrison's story: He is much too modest in telling the part he, himself, has played in building the museum into an institution the county may well be proud of. Certainly, those of us who have watched it grow in the twenty years of Mr. Morrison's curatorship know where the credit belongs.

It is pertinent to speak of the museum at this time for another reason. During the past few months the officers of the Historical Society have been negotiating with the Board of Supervisors with the object of taking over the active management of the museum. There appears every reason to believe that the plan will be successful. In order to proceed properly in the matter, it was deemed advisable for the Society to incorporate. To be perfectly truthful, this should have been done at the time the Society was organized in 1955, but was overlooked in the press of more urgent business. Some delay has been experienced, but it is hoped justice will have triumphed over Sacramento red tape by the time the May issue of the Quarterly reaches the members. With the Pioneer Museum for a home, the Society should have the incentive to go on to bigger and better things.

# The Fosters

By R. G. PERCY

Eugene Preston Foster was an early Ventura County rancher, and later a banker in the town of Ventura. He and his wife, Orpha Woods Foster, are best remembered for their many philanthropies to the county and the town where they accumulated their wealth.

E. P. Foster came across the plains to California in a covered wagon with his parents as a child in the early 1850's(1). His brother, Frank, a well known rancher in the Santa Paula area for many years, was born near Salt Lake, where the wagon train laid over three days for the event. The Foster family first settled near San Jose and later lived near Half Moon Bay. Here Eugene Foster grew to manhood. His parents had brought one of the first herds of Durham cattle to California with them when they came from Illinois. For a time, while still in their teens, Eugene and Frank looked after the Foster cattle on the Nacimiento Grant, near where Paso Robles is today.

The family eventually settled in the Goleta Valley north of Santa Barbara. It was in 1871 that Mr. Foster came to Ventura County. He bought a tract of land in the Santa Clara Valley in the Springville district. At that time, so Mr. Foster has told me, the wild mustard covered the valley; even when he stood up in his spring wagon, it was higher than his head.

He did not remain long in Ventura County at this time but returned to Goleta, where for a year or more he worked with his brother-in-law, Joseph Sexton. Sexton had established one of the earliest nurseries in California. Ventura County was separated from Santa Barbara County in 1873, and shortly after that Mr. Foster returned to go into the sheep business with Mr. Edwards of Santa Barbara. The entire Conejo Valley became their pasture; their flocks numbered more than ten thousand head. The headquarters were located where the Janss Ranch is today. In August, 1874 Eugene Preston Foster was married to Miss Orpha Woods at the home of her sister on Ventura Avenue and took his bride to live with him on the Conejo.

Dry years came to Ventura County in the past as they do today. The one of 1864 ruined the Spanish Californian rancheros as they watched their vast herds die of starvation. The drought of 1877 did the same to many American ranchers who succeeded them. Foster and Edwards were among them. Week after week, month after month, the skies remained cloudless; and there was not enough rain to start the new grass or to rejuvenate the dried up pastures. Only those who have watched their stock grow thin, weak and lie down to die of starvation, can realize what that means. And they were helpless to do anything about it.





Orpha Woods Foster

Chaffee and McKeeby, merchants of Ventura, began to buy up the starving sheep at ten cents a head. It was a speculation in that they were to attempt to drive them to Arizona or Texas to pasture. In May Mr. Foster and his herder drove the last of ten thousand still alive across the hills to Piru. There were three thousand head and they were sold to Chaffee and McKeeby for three hundred dollars. The firm had bought twenty thousand head at this figure. In charge of Jake Nidever, the bands were started on the long trek to find pasturage. By the time they reached Flagstaff, Arizona, the desert was strewn with rotting carcasses and only eighteen hundred remained. Nidever sold them for what he could get and returned to Ventura. It had proven a poor speculation.

Mr. Foster was broke. He told me he walked in to Ventura. Here W. S. Chaffee, who was head of the Santa Ana Water Company, gave him a job as ditchtender at forty dollars a month. He hired a man with a wagon to go to the Conejo and bring his family to town, and stood him off until the first pay day for his money. He had been a partner with Edwards in the livestock but not in the land. At that time no one wanted land either, although he still owned the original land at Springville.

He continued to work as ditchtender, and Mrs. Foster kept the water company books. Eventually he bought the property on Ventura Avenue which became the Foster home. Having learned the nursery business with his brother-in-law, he planted an apricot nursery on his place in his spare time, often working sixteen to eighteen hours a day on his job as ditchtender and caring for his nursery on the side.

James Day owned two hundred acres of vacant land in the Mound district. When Mr. Foster's trees were old enough to plant he contracted with Day to plant his land and care for the orchard until it came into bearing. He was to receive one half of the orchard in return. To provide care for the trees he rented the land in between the trees to Chinese to farm. This business transaction with Day was the foundation of his fortune.

He traded his half of the orchard for ten thousand dollars worth of stock in the Bank of Ventura, the county's first bank. Mr. Foster became cashier and not long after that president, a position he held until the bank was sold to Bank of Italy, the fore-runner of the Bank of America. He continued for many years as Chairman of the Advisory Committee of the Bank of America.

It is for their philanthropies that Ventura County should always remember Mr. and Mrs. Foster, as well as for their many other wonderful qualities. They were both active in civic affairs and willing to work for and support every worth while project. They were interested in young people and education, and for many years he was head of the Ventura High School Trustees. Mrs. Foster became a trustee of the Ventura School for Girls when it was first established. Each Christmas for many years every boy in the Avenue School received a new pocket knife as a gift from Mr. Foster.

I was a boy of ten when my association with Mr. Foster first began. My Christmas present from him was a little special; it was a shiny new ten dollar gold piece. In the years that followed he became almost a father to me. I had lost my own father at the age of four. Listening to Mr. Foster tell of his early life in California awakened in me a love for history, and it is still my hobby.

The Fosters loved trees and picnics. They often drove their carriage and two beautiful horses to the Casitas and Camp Comfort long before either place was a public park. Many of the trees still standing at the Foster home and in the Avenue School yard were planted by Mr. Foster.

As early as 1904 Mr. Foster conceived the idea of parks. Camp Comfort had long been a stopping place on the Creek Road to Ojai. Under the giant oaks beside the stream was a beautiful spot for a picnic. The land belonged to John Hobson, and he was cutting thousands of cords of wood and selling it from his property. Mr. Foster persuaded the supervisors to acquire the land along the creek where these trees stood before they too fell before the ax. There were almost 21 acres



in the tract that was bought. Mr. Foster, K. P. Grant and others contributed a part of the money and the county put up the balance. Thus Ventura County's first park came into being.

I believe that it was his reading an autobiography of Andrew Carnegie that gave Mr. Foster the inspiration for future philanthropies. He received the book as a Christmas present about the time that Carnegie Libraries were being established. I know, for he loaned me the book to read after he finished it, and he became a great admirer of Carnegie.

The Fosters had five daughters and one son, Eugene, the youngest child. Eugene died in childhood, and it was a hard blow to the family. It was then that I became so close to Mr. Foster, a relationship that was to last for many years.

It was about 1910 or '11 that Mr. and Mrs. Foster bought the original 65 acres of what is now Foster Park from the Ayers Ranch (now Rancho Casitas) and presented it to the county for a park as a memorial to their son, Eugene. This was on the west side of the Ventura River and Coyote Creek. He persuaded G. W. Chrisman, then head of the water company, to give 35 acres in the river bottom, the company reserving the water rights. It was here that water was taken out of the river by ditch to supply Ventura. Another 40 acres were added by the Southern Pacific Railway Company between the Ojai branch line and the river, on the east side. Later, when O. A. Wadleigh sold the Casitas Ranch to the Hobsons, Mr. Foster persuaded them to give an additional 160 acres of wooded hills behind the original park. They did this in consideration of his help in making the deal. This beautiful park was to belong to the public for all time.

Next the Fosters conceived the idea of a miniature Golden Gate Park where the old race track and grandstand were in the swampy lowland near the mouth of the Ventura River. This had once been the scene where county horsemen had raced their fine horses in the early days. Mr. Foster knew John McLaren who had built Golden Gate Park out of San Francisco's sand hills. They bought the 65 acres and presented it to the county, and later gave an additional 14 acres.

The original horse stables still stood along the beach side, and a high board fence made a wind break for planting the first trees, which were cypress and eucalyptus, surrounding the park. The old grandstand was repaired and a new half mile race track was laid out. Mr. Foster supervised the planting of those first trees and the early development of the three parks that the county now owned, in his spare time from banking duties and other interests.

It was in 1914 that the state passed a law creating county forestry commissions, one member from each supervisorial district. The purpose was to create and develop parks, and to beautify the newly paved highways that were just coming into being. The commission was to appoint a county forester, who was to be secretary and in charge of the work. Ventura's first commission was made up of such prominent



citizens of the county as E. P. Foster, Chairman, T. A. Rice, Mrs. L. B. Hogue, F. A. Snyder and A. C. Hardison as members. They met monthly.

Although I was engaged in the nursery business and ranching, Mr. Foster persuaded me to become the first County Forester, a position I held for four years until my own affairs caused me to resign. It was during this time that many of the parks were developed and miles of trees planted along the highways of Ventura County. Many of the trees are still standing; others have given way to the widening of the highways, for we didn't dream of the automobile traffic of future years.

Caretakers were hired for Seaside and Foster Parks. Three of the horse stables at Seaside were converted into a greenhouse. Here we started trees and shrubs from seed, and later planted them in a nursery at the park. We grew thousands of them for future planting. A caretaker's house was built at Foster Park, water was pumped and lines laid; rest rooms were built. Next, barbecue pits faced with cobblestone, picnic tables and many other things were provided for the public. More trees were planted at Seaside; tennis courts were built, and lawns planted. Seaside Park was on its way to fulfill Mr. Foster's dream of becoming a miniature Golden Gate Park. He would be very disappointed today if he could see what future management had done to his dream.

In all our work Mr. Foster took an active part in the planning. Through his efforts the three small parks along the Rincon Highway were donated; two by the Hobson interests and one by M. Faria. We planted them to trees. Our first project was planting palm trees along both sides of Rincon Highway from the Ventura River to the Santa Barbara County line. Some still stand; others have given way to progress as the highway was widened. At the request of Supervisor Charles C. Perkins and Adolfo Camarillo we planted palms, many of which are still standing, along the State Highway through Camarillo to the foot of the Conejo Grade and on this side of town.

From the top of the grade to the Los Angeles County line we planted pepper, elm, Arizona ash and eucalyptus trees. The same was done from Piru to the county line. Between Ventura and Ojai were planted palms, pines, elms and pepper trees, many of which are still there. In planting trees along the highways we consulted the wishes of the adjoining land owners. At the request of Supervisor Shiells we planted palms along the road leading to Bardsdale. This work and the parks was no small undertaking. The trees had to be watered and cared for until they were well rooted. On the Rincon the water was hauled with a tank wagon and team from Ventura. Besides our hired employees we used trustees from the county jail to work at Seaside Park and along the Rincon. In more distant work we sent two men with a camp wagon and tank wagon.

The parks became very popular. On what became known as the "Island," between Coyote Creek and the Ventura River, many Ventura





Entrance to Foster Park, 1914

people established camps and spent the summer there. The same was allowed east of the river. Each summer we built a temporary dam in the river to make a swimming pool. That was in the days when the Ventura River and Coyote Creek flowed water all year.

Through the efforts of Mr. Foster Oak Grove Park, between Moorpark and Simi, was donated by the Strathearn family. We planted it to trees to add to the oaks and sycamores growing there. The other county parks did not come into being until after my resignation, but Mr. Foster had a number of them in mind even then. As we went on inspection trips throughout the county he mentioned the oak grove at the foot of the Conejo Grade, a park someday in Santa Paula Canyon (which today is Steckel Park), Kenny Grove, which had long been a picnic spot for people in the east end of the county, and others which he hoped to see the county acquire.

What we were doing was not without opposition, particularly from the Supervisor from the Oxnard District. We had no budget or appropriation to work on in those days. County government was on a hit and miss plan. I did what the Forestry Commission suggested, or what I suggested to them for their approval. Each month I made out county warrants and O.K.'d them. When they went before the Board of Supervisors for approval there was usually fireworks, and I was called on the carpet. If the going got too rough Mr. Foster would come up from the bank and back me up. His word and that of the prominent members of the commission carried a lot of weight. Once in disgust I blew up at the criticism of the Supervisor from Oxnard and told the board that they could take their job and go to ----, that I did



not need or want it. But the Forestry Board backed me up and so did four of the Board of Supervisors in the end.

The Supervisor from Oxnard then circulated a petition and got a farmer from Mound to circulate another to do away with the parks, the Forestry Commission and particularly me. They secured plenty of signers too. But the four supervisors stood pat and the petition was filed.

Mr. A. C. Hardison told me not long ago that Mr. Foster was really the Forestry Commission. Although the commission met occasionally it was mostly to approve of what Mr. Foster and I were having done, for he was the one who was in contact with the work. I resigned during the war in 1918 due to pressure of my own affairs. My resignation was refused, even the Supervisor from Oxnard no longer objecting. At the insistence of Mr. Foster and the board I consented to give what time I could to the parks until they could find someone else, and continued on this basis for another six months.

In 1924 the Dennison family of the Upper Ojai donated 32 acres at the top of the grade for a park. This was due to the efforts of Mr. Foster and Supervisor Clark. In 1926 the county purchased 150 acres from the Dietz Ranch for a park. This had long been a spot that Mr. Foster wanted to see made into a park for that end of the county. Just how much influence he had with Mr. Steckel to get him to give \$5,000 towards the \$15,000 purchase price I do not know, but he knew Mr. Steckel well, both of them being bankers in the county. Nor do I know how much he influenced the acquiring of Kenny Grove or Camarillo Park, although he had them in mind when I worked with him.

He and K. P. Grant had been instrumental in getting the county to acquire the first park, Camp Comfort, and probably he had something to do with Mr. Grant donating Grant Park on the hills overlooking the city of Ventura. I know that Mr. Foster supervised the planting of the trees growing there, and that they came from the nursery which I had established in Seaside Park.

Mr. and Mrs. Foster still did not feel that they had done enough for their community. They bought a part of the Shepherd Gardens near the corner of Chestnut and Main streets in Ventura, built the beautiful building that now houses the County Library, and presented it to the city. Mr. Foster, now retired, built the cobblestone fountain in front of the Library with his own hands, just as he had planted so many of the trees in the parks and other places.

The Foster Memorial Hospital was an outgrowth of the Bard Memorial Hospital, which in turn became the Big Sisters' Hospital in Ventura. When the need came for a new and up to date hospital in Ventura, the Big Sister's League attempted to raise money to build a new building. E. P. Foster scoured the community for subscriptions, because his daughters were active in the Big Sister's League. Lacking



fifty thousand dollars of raising enough money, Mr. Foster donated the balance. It was first known as the Ventura Hospital. A few years later, because of the confusion of the name with the Ventura County Hospital, Mrs. Fuller, the Superintendent, suggested that it be renamed the E. P. Foster Memorial Hospital.

In the years since Ventura County came into existence there has been no one who has been more unselfish in their love of their fellow man, or who has done more for their community than the Fosters. It is fitting that the Ventura County Historical Society should pay tribute to Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Preston Foster. Many people of Ventura County do not even know who they were, since the population has increased so rapidly, but they still enjoy their generosity. I knew them throughout my lifetime and am proud to have called them my friends.

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Editor's note: A day by day account of this journey is given in *The Foster Family, California Pioneers 1849*, a very rare book first published in San Jose, California, in 1889. Apparently only a few copies were printed for members of the family. A second edition printed in 1926 for "the Grandchildren of the second generation," contains additional material on the Foster family. It is also a very scarce book.

#### ERRATA

In the February issue of the *Quarterly* two names appeared incorrectly. That of John J. Ricker should be corrected to read John G. Ricker, and that of O. D. Wadleigh should be corrected to read O. A. Wadleigh.

# The Wreck of the Winfield Scott

Reprinted from the *Ventura Signal* of August 4, 1883

The story of the wreck of the Panama Steamship Winfield Scott nearly in sight of Santa Barbara, nearly thirty years ago, has just been given to the public by a survivor of the wreck, Mr. Charles F. Holden, who writes to the *Chicago Times*. From Holden's story the following condensation is made. The Winfield Scott with 200 passengers for Panama went on the rocks off Anacapa Island. Capt. Blunt, who commanded the steamer, had decided that the Santa Barbara channel was the shortest cut to Panama.

Our steamer took the inside track or the Santa Barbara channel, and the night of December 1 and the day of December 2 passed pleasantly. Early in the day we could with field-glasses see the steamships of other lines or companies at a great distance to the west of us; they, too, were making for Panama, but had taken the old, safe outside track. As it appeared, we certainly would beat them into Panama by from twelve to twenty hours, which was worth saving to the Pacific Steamship Company. On the night of December 2, soon after supper, a dense fog set in. We were then off Santa Barbara, steaming along finely, but the fog came, and such a fog, too. The passengers however, gave no heed to it, not dreaming of danger, and the ship glided swiftly along over the smooth sea. The hours passed pleasantly, and by ten o'clock or perhaps a little longer, most of the passengers had retired to their stateroom for the night, unconscious of the danger that was soon to overtake them. At about the time the passengers retired there was a great commotion among the officers of the ship, and orders were quickly given to the man at the helm, and I presume the course of the steamer was changed somewhat, as it was quickly rumored that we had barely escaped a point of rocks making out from the island of Santa Cruz. The officers again settled down quite at ease, though it could be seen they were vigilant and at their post of duty. The steamer sped on through the fog so dense it would seem that one could cut it with a knife, so thick and heavy did it appear, when about 11 o'clock all hands were aroused as if by magic, for the ship when under full headway had run upon the rocks. Instantly as it would seem the deck was covered with the passengers, every stateroom being at once emptied of its inmates, seeking for safety upon the ship's deck. All knew as if by instinct, that some terrible calamity had befallen the steamer. Men, women and children were there in one common mass. The clear voice of the captain could be distinctly heard as he gave his orders pertaining to the saving of the lives of those on board, and also as to the handling of the ship foundering on the rocks. As if by intuition the captain found that she had struck the lower edge of a slanting ledge of rocks, and gave immediate orders to the engineer to force her on this ledge as far as possible, and then, re-



membering the fate of the passenger steamer Independence, ordered the fires under the boilers at once put out that the rush of water in the engine-room and suddenly upon the fires might not precipitate a fire, and thus burn up what was left of the sinking ship, as was the case a short time before with the steamship Independence. Life-preservers were fastened around each passenger and all on board were preparing for the worst.

The dashing of the waves against the rocks, and the sure sinking of the steamer or the going to pieces in the dense fog, was well calculated to alarm the strongest heart. Some were praying and others imploring to be saved from a watery grave which at that time bid fair to engulf us all. It was a fearful time; a time of terrible suspense.

The cool-headed were actively at work getting ready for the tussle with the water when driven to it, by arranging different kinds of material—like cabin doors, chairs, and other material for rafts and floats. One gentleman, who had his wife and family on board was nearly distracted. He ran up and down the deck like one beside himself, while his wife was as cool as the coolest, counseling all those near her to be calm and to be sure and obey the orders of the captain of the boat. I think his name was Diamonds, a merchant of New York City. The captain knew that some unknown current had taken the steamer out of its course, but where he then was he could not tell for you could not see half the ship's length, so dense was the fog. A boat had been dispatched to feel around among the rocks, and to find a place to land the passengers, provided the vessel did not go to pieces in the meantime. It returned and reported favorably, when the debarkation commenced. The boats which had been filled with women and children and the sick were first taken to the spot of rescue, then the passengers in general; and it was but a very short time before all were landed on the rocks, where they climbed far above the water's edge, thankful beyond measure that they had thus escaped a watery grave. Judge the surprise of the captain and crew when the fog cleared away to find the bow of the ship within two hundred feet of a ledge of rock several hundred feet in height, upon which the steamer was rushing when she struck the ledge that saved her and all on board from instant destruction. The passengers, when daylight came, found themselves all huddled on a mere ledge, surrounded by water, while a short distance away was the main island of which this spur was a part.

The captain found that they were on a reef a few hundred feet from Anacapa Island which was in plain view of the Pueblo of Santa Barbara. The passengers were transferred with what provisions were obtainable, to the main island where the crowd huddled together the best they could.

The vessel was a complete wreck. The captain at once dispatched a boat for the main shore with dispatches to San Francisco to the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, informing them of our fate and calling for immediate assistance, but the distance being more than four



hundred miles, it took time to reach San Francisco, as there were neither railroads nor telegraph from Lower California(sic) to the metropolis. When these steps had been taken we settled down to abide our time. We felt happy that we had been saved from the wreck, and now the question was how could we get away from our miserable little island.

Our first meal on the island was doled out to us about 10 A.M. December 3, 1853. It consisted of such food as they had been able to save, and it was good enough, the only question was whether it would hold out until help would reach us. After this we scattered among the rocks, all scanning the ocean for help. At about 3 P.M. of that day December 3, one of the regular mail steamers was seen in the distance en route for San Francisco. The signal of distress attracted her attention, when a captain, with a small boat came to us, not daring to come nearer than a couple of miles with the steamer. It was the steamship California, and Captain Leroy was her commander. She was heavily loaded with passengers for San Francisco, but took some of the passengers from our island home back to San Francisco, and among the number Mr. Diamonds and his family. Then we awaited results.

The shipwrecked crowd on Anacapa waited anxiously for relief from San Francisco. It was the eighth day after the departure of the California before assistance arrived. In the meantime the provisions and the water had been exhausted, and the situation was desperate. On the morning of the eighth day (December 10, 1853) the report of a cannon was heard on the island. Instantaneous, as it seemed, the crowd hurrahed, screamed, and yelled for joy. Assistance was close at hand, so we all thought. As it was quite dark large piles of seagrass were lighted, and the gun which had been taken from the wreck made answer in tones of thunder. The little island seemed alive at the moment then came a lull for ten minutes, and the time seemed an hour, when all began to think the report was from the shore which was nearly 25 miles away. Suddenly there came another report, and then another. The gun on the island was making answer and the little party shouted as none but those in dire distress can shout. The firing of the cannon from the island and the shouting continued with casual reports from the ship of succor, until in the early mist of the morning the little steamer came in full view, feeling her way towards us, and when within about a mile and a half, her boats were manned and dispatched to our rescue.

The nearly starving passengers and crew, nearly 300 in all, were taken off the island and taken to Panama where they raised a subscription for the purpose of presenting a silver service to Captain Leroy who had saved them from death by starvation. Such is the story of a wreck in the Santa Barbara channel thirty years ago, and long before newspapers had been presented in this city or county.



# Your County Museum

By J. H. MORRISON

Curator of the Pioneer Museum

Museums have come a long way since the Alexandrian Museum—which actually was a library where the learned men of the city met for study and discussion—was founded in 280 B.C. or thereabouts. For centuries a museum was just what its name implies: a home for the Muses of literature and art; and as such it survived the Dark Ages until, with the revival of learning in Europe, the term came to be applied to collections of antiquities, sculpture and paintings. Then followed collections concerned with natural history and other sciences until today there are museum collections illustrative of nearly any subject one may name. Almost any part of the world is a bonanza for the avid collector, Ventura County being no exception, for as early as 1852 scientific explorations of Chumash village and burial sites were being made, and artifacts collected for study and preservation.

Rev. Stephen Bowers, Ph.D., editor of the *Ventura Free Press* in the mid-eighties, was a scientist of some note who did quite a lot of excavating at Indian sites, thus acquiring a large and varied collection of artifacts. When the buildings comprising the remnants of the Mission quadrangle were torn down about 1886, Dr. Bowers procured from Fr. Rubio a number of the adobe bricks and tiles with which he built a small structure on his property at Oak and Santa Clara Streets, to house a portion of his collection. Some twenty years later this building was moved to a site on Colombo Street where, shadowed by the one remaining Mission date palm, it still stands, much in need of repair.

Mr. K. P. Grant, a pioneer of Ventura County, spent some two years in Samoa in the mid-eighties and on his return brought a large collection of bird eggs and many South Sea items. This collection was housed in the rooms of the City Library, in the City Hall at the Northwest corner of Main and California Streets, remaining there for ten or twelve years. When a new City Hall was built on the site the collection was taken by Mr. Grant, but what became of it is not known, despite diligent search by Messrs. Sheridan and the present curator.

Although it was not established until twelve years after his death, the Ventura County Museum owes its existence to Dr. Cephas L. Bard who commenced his medical practice at Ventura in 1868. Dr. Bard was a man of parts. A brilliant practitioner of his profession, he nevertheless found time for inventions, writing, civic duties and the collection of Indian and Spanish items relating to this county. Many of these items he took in lieu of his fee, after a ride of 50 or 100 miles on horseback to reach his patient.



Mr. J. H. Morrison, Curator of the Pioneer Museum, standing beside Ventura's first museum building.

In his thirty-four years of practice, Dr. Bard acquired a valuable collection of some 300 items consisting principally of artifacts connected with the three Indian cultures known to have inhabited this locality over a period of approximately 10,000 years. Anxious that his collection be properly housed and displayed for public benefit, Dr. Bard proposed the erection of a Pioneer Hall in Ventura and obtained subscriptions from members of the Pioneer Society amounting to \$3,000, but, unfortunately, the men who were perhaps forty years old in 1873 were sixty-five in 1898 and life expectancy was much less than it is now. Pioneer ranks were rapidly thinning. Anyway, the subscriptions were never collected so the building was not erected; and Dr. Bard died early in 1902 in the hospital that he and his brother, Thomas R. Bard, had built as a memorial to their mother, Elizabeth Bard.

In his will, Dr. Cephas L. Bard left to Elizabeth Bard Memorial Hospital his collection of curios—"in trust, to be delivered to the Society of Ventura County Pioneers when that Society shall erect a suitable hall in the town of San Buenaventura, my executors, hereinafter named, to determine the suitability of such hall to receive the curios."



Following his death in April, 1902, the collection was moved to the hospital building where it was placed in storage. There it remained until completion of the present Courthouse when, on December 2nd, 1913, Messrs. Thos. R. Bard, Kenneth P. Grant and William E. Shepherd representing the Pioneer Society, and others from the local Chamber of Commerce, appeared before the Board of Supervisors asking that the Board accept the Dr. Cephas L. Bard collection, to be placed in the Chamber of Commerce room of the Courthouse to form the beginning of a County Historical Museum. Chairman Camarillo, speaking for the Board, said that the Board would gladly accept this trust and would agree to properly care for and preserve this collection of Ventura County curios. The resolution adopted by the Board reads in part, as follows:

RESOLVED: That the Board of Suprvisors accepts the Dr. Cephas L. Bard collection of curios, and that the same be ordered installed in the Chamber of Commerce room where it can be seen and enjoyed by the people of Ventura County; and be it further RESOLVED that this Board agrees to properly preserve and care for this collection and to have it so set apart that it shall be known for all time as "The Cephas L. Bard Collection."

Mr. Sol N. Sheridan (on recommendation of the Pioneers' Committee) was appointed as Curator and immediately entered upon the discharge of his duties, securing many exhibits in addition to the Bard collection. Upon his resignation in 1916. Mr. Edwin M. Sheridan was appointed as his successor and served until September, 1938, when he was succeeded by the present incumbent. Mr. Sheridan was, himself, a pioneer of 1873 and to his wide acquaintance throughout Ventura County, together with his untiring effort during the twenty years of his curatorship, goes credit for a large portion of the material now on display in the Ventura County Pioneer Museum.

The Museum kept its original quarters until January, 1950, when the collection was moved to the present building and opened to the public on March 1st. This building, after only seven years of occupancy, is already inadequate to the needs of the Pioneer Museum; a situation, unfortunately, common to most such institutions, large or small. However, by changing displays from time to time the staff is able to put the most interesting items on exhibit, but this cannot be done overnight.

If, as is said, "Patience is a virtue," conscientious curators of small museums are, perforce, models of that somewhat rare attribute. The fledgling curator may start his tenure with a "do it now" spirit but soon learns that persuasion is preferable to force for the securing of worthwhile acquisitions. Only lately has the Pioneer Museum secured a number of photographs which have been the subject of correspondence since 1940, and many other instances might be cited. Of course, many items are brought to the Museum, to be accepted or rejected on the

spot, (and there are many rejections because of unsuitability,) but for the most part, the really valuable items do not just drop into the curator's lap.

As has been shown the original plan was to make the Pioneer Museum collection wholly historical, but the term is somewhat vague since almost anything from anthropology to zoology may have historical significance, and usually does. Thus, while confining the collection primarily to local items, Mr. E. M. Sheridan realized the necessity of accepting worthwhile articles of historical or scientific value, a policy which has been continued by the present curator. The result of this policy is a collection which for its size and scope is, we believe, second to none in California and one of which the people of Ventura County, to whom it belongs, may well be proud.

In the opening sentence of this article it is stated that museums have come a long way since 280 B.C., but so far as the writer is concerned they have come a long way since 1889 when he made his first museum visit to the Elgin Museum ( a hard G, please) in the town of Elgin, Scotland, at the age of 11. A drearier place can hardly be imagined; and the curator, who must have been nearing the century mark, had completely forgotten that he was once a boy. Anyway, though I was accompanied by my father, the old fellow dogged our footsteps, never saying a word during our visit. My only other recollection of the place is that it was a mish-mash of ancient weapons, suits of armor, both plate and mail, all covered with a protective coating of inch thick dust. Some people never learn, so forty years later I found myself installed as curator of Ventura County Pioneer Museum where, for the past twenty years I have been "A Most Happy Fellow."

Our museum may never be anything more than a small institution, though it undoubtedly will become larger than it is now. A certain amount of growth is, of course, desirable; but mere size has its drawbacks in that relations between the staff and the public become, in so many cases, impersonal. While the present staff is in charge, we expect to have our desks out in the open where the small boy with the piece of shiny colored stone or the girl with a (to her) strange sea-shell is just as welcome as the adult seeking research material, or information on his or her great-grandparents. We can usually furnish the desired material and the chance is better than even that we have a photograph of the old folks in our files.

We want the people of Ventura County to feel that the Pioneer Museum is their museum. After all, they pay the bills.



## Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association

Santa Paula in 1890 does not appear to have been the type of town that would induce the modern financier to start a savings and loan association. Eighteen years earlier Nathan W. Blanchard had come to the site and found a few adobe buildings and the remnants of an agricultural activity dating back to the days of the Padres. After looking the territory over he decided that it would be an ideal location for a town, and the result was the formation of the firm of Blanchard and Bradley. In 1890 Santa Paula boasted of a population of 1,200 and a business district composed of two drug stores, two hotels, three restaurants, one shoe store, one cobbler shop, one men's furnishing shop, two milliners, two real estate offices, two livery stables, one bakery, two butcher shops, one harness shop, and an undetermined number of saloons. In the words of the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association on the occasion of their 50th Anniversary in 1940, "In 1890 the valley cradling Santa Paula was still a frontier presenting a challenge to the hardy settlers who chose its fertile lands as the scene of their future fortunes."

It was in this frontier atmosphere that a small group of Santa Paula citizens met and formed what is now known as the Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association. Recognizing the need for an institution through which families might finance homes without paying exorbitant interest rates, this group secured a charter and founded the mutual association on April 20, 1890 as the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association. J. R. Haugh, local banker, was chosen as the first president; the other members of the Board of Directors being composed of Caspar Taylor, Vice President; H. H. Youngken, Secretary; C. N. Baker, Treasurer; J. A. Davis, L. A. Hardison, Henry Manning, Chas. A. Griffiths, Dr. M. F. Patten and John Erwin.

During its early history the association was the only financial institution in the Santa Clara Valley that made residential loans. The first loan was for a dwelling that stood for years on the northeast corner of Main and Seventh Streets. Oddly enough, it was a woman who secured that first loan. The minutes of the association indicate there were a number of borrowers who wanted to make a loan and bids were accepted for the money. The highest bidder offered a bonus of 25 percent and actually received \$375 for her \$500 loan. By 1940, the woman who secured the first loan was one of the associations largest shareholders.

For the first few years the business of the association was transacted wherever H. H. Youngken, the first secretary, happened to be at the time. Usually this was the First National Bank, with which he was associated. It was not until 1924, after financing hundreds of private dwellings, that the Santa Paula Building and Loan finally purchased a home of its own. Recently the association built and moved into a



The first loan issued by the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association was made on this house in 1890.

fine modern office on North Tenth Street. This building is symbolical; not only of the growth of the association itself, but of the town it helped to build.

It is difficult, without using statistics, to determine the part an organization such as the Santa Paula Savings and Loan plays in the growth and development of a community. A high percentage of the loans made are on homes, homes that represent the core of the American way of life. Human values cannot be reduced to statistics.

The Ventura County Historical Society offers its congratulations to the Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association for its 67 years of service to the people of the Santa Clara Valley. May the association and the community continue to prosper in the years ahead.

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(Note: This is the second in a series of articles dealing with the historic business firms of Ventura County.)



## How Seymour Creek Was Named

Along the northern boundary of Ventura County there is a pretty little canyon on the south slopes of Mt. Pinos. At the bottom of this canyon is a stream that for many years has been called Seymour Creek. In more recent times the name "Seymour" has also been applied to a road and a public camp ground. It is doubtful if even the older inhabitants of the district have any idea of the origin of the name and how it came to be bestowed upon the creek.

In the late 1880's a group of California state geologists was preparing for a survey expedition into the Lockwood Valley and adjacent regions. The party was staying at the old Petrolia Hotel in Santa Paula while final preparations were being made. One of the members was no stranger to Santa Paula. He was Stephen Bowers, Methodist minister, newspaper publisher and now, by his own admission, "Assistant in the Field" to the survey party. Bowers utilized his spare time in renewing old acquaintances around the town where he had been the regularly assigned Methodist minister in 1884. Among these old friends was one Louisa Seymour, a spinster of some 42 years. One day Dr. Bowers said to his friend, "Miss Seymour, when we get into the back country I am going to find a nice stream or mountain and name it for you."

The survey party spent a number of weeks taking notes on what was called "The Piru Mining District," determining that the summit of Mt. Pinos was in Ventura County and generally exploring the region. When they again returned to Santa Paula, Bowers informed Miss Seymour that they had given the name of Seymour Creek to a stream that flowed down from Mt. Pinos and into the Piru. Of course she was flattered but seems to have forgotten the incident.

Many years later the lady in this story, now Mrs. Louisa Hedrick, was visiting with a neighbor who had just returned from a hunting trip into the Lockwood country. She asked him if he knew of any Seymour Creek in the area. The reply was that he knew of the creek and also of Seymour Road and Seymour Campground. It was then that the story came out about how the name was applied by Bowers over 50 years before.

Strangely enough, although she lived the greater portion of her life in Ventura County, Mrs. Louisa Seymour Hedrick never saw the stream that still bears her name. Several times her neighbor, Tom Harrison, talked of taking her into the Seymour Creek region; but her advanced age ruled against the idea. Harrison did take a camera and photographed the various points of interest around Seymour Creek to show her, but she died at the age of 98 without ever casting her eyes upon the beautiful canyon and stream that Bowers had named in her honor.

## Miscellany

From the files of the *Ventura Signal*

Barlett's Cornet Band propose giving a fancy dress ball on the evening of May 1 at Spear's Hall. Those who attend, while not expected to procure expensive dresses will be expected to come in costume, remembering that the most inexpensive material can be used with as good effect as the most costly. April 20, 1878.

A. D. Barnard informs us that M. Watson of Battle Creek, Mich., has constructed a dry earth gold washing machine and came on the last steamer en route to the Piru mines with his invention to commence gold washing. May 25, 1878.

Judging by its best known acts, the controlling principle of communism is violence. June 1, 1878.

Mr. Robt. Ferguson and two companions caught 38½ dozen trout in the Ventura river one day last week. Mr. Ferguson used the old country fly and caught 186. They passed through with their fish on Sunday. June 15, 1878.

Mr. Frank Hyde has sent for a phonograph, which if he receives he will place on exhibition, so that all may have an opportunity of hearing the wonderful instrument reproduce their own voices. April 27, 1878.

The Germania picnic at Borchard's Grove on the 12 inst will be largely attended by men, women, children and babies of all nationalities. A grand time is anticipated. May 4, 1878.

Whale oil soap for destroying insects, at the Pioneer Drug Store. Supply of Blue Gum seed just received at the Pioneer Drug Store. May 11, 1878.

Midnight soliloquy of the man who supped on dried apples: "Twelve o'clock and all swell." May 4, 1878.

Judge E. Fawcett has been spoken of by many citizens here as a proper person to send to the Constitutional Convention as one of the delegates at large. If he should consent to be a candidate he would get nine tenths of all votes in the county. No man in the district stands higher here than Judge Fawcett. April 20, 1878.

R. F. Del Valle, a son of Don Ignacio Del Valle, of the Camulos, one of our most promising young lawyers, and a thorough gentleman in every sense, has located in Los Angeles, where we doubt not he will make a good record in his profession. May 11, 1878.

It is remarkable that whenever the Army Appropriation Bill is in danger an Indian war is sure to start up. June 15, 1878.



## *Half a Century of Service*

Reserved for business firms that are sustaining members of the Historical Society, and that have been serving the people of Ventura County for 50 years or more.

*Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Co.* Organized on April 4, 1898 with E. P. Foster, president, N. W. Blanchard, vice president, and Charles Barnard, secretary. For over 57 years this old Ventura County business firm has faithfully followed the high standards set by its pioneer organizers.

*Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association.* Organized in April 1890 as the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association with J. R. Haugh, president, Caspar Taylor, vice-president, and H. H. Youngken, secretary. For 65 years this organization has served the interests of home owners and builders, as well as those of the investor.

*Peoples Lumber Co.* This firm was organized in 1890 by a host of Ventura County Pioneers. For 66 years it has been serving the construction needs of its founders, their descendants, and countless thousands of newcomers.

*County Stationers, Inc.,* 532 E. Main, Ventura. Since 1898 Ventura County's complete stationer and office furniture dealer.

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VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*QUARTERLY*



Sherman Day Thacher

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# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

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## Our Schools

It is fitting that the first article devoted solely to education in Ventura County would be concerned with Thacher School. Because of its continuity in name, campus and tradition, it has achieved a national position of prominence.

There have been regular references to schooling by other articles which showed that education was a part of the early social picture. In one of the first issues of the *Quarterly*, Fergus Fairbanks, in writing about Bardsdale, stated: "I mention so fully these items about schools and churches because in every new development of our Country they have been gathering places for the people." If space had permitted, Mr. Fairbanks might well have elaborated upon the importance of schools to our way of life. It is somewhat disconcerting, then, to find that the factual history of the schools in Ventura County prior to 1900 is almost non-existent. There are few source records available, even at the courthouse, and what knowledge we do possess is mostly in the form of memories from a few oldtimers who attended some particular school.

It is gratifying, therefore, to be able to present in this issue a factual and authenticated story of one of the outstanding schools in the county as well as the nation. The author has succeeded in catching something of the spirit of The Thacher School that has always left so profound an impression upon all who have come in contact with it. This spirit at Thacher is an infectious thing, as hundreds of former Ventura County athletes will testify. Those of us who were privileged to play against the boys from the Ojai hills will never forget the experience. An adverse decision by the umpire fazed them not at all. A lost game, and Thacher lost many to the larger public schools, was not the tragedy that it was to us. When the last out was made these boys of Sherman Thacher would depart, leaving us with the uncanny feeling that in defeat their victory was greater than ours.

*For when the one great Scorer comes  
to write against your name,  
He marks—not that you won or lost—but  
how you played the game.*

# The Thacher School: The First Years

By BASIL MCGANN

There is in the library of The Thacher School a manuscript written in pencil on ruled tablet paper entitled, "A Brief History of the School." It was once catalogued in the School's archives under "1904 Quindecennial" but the opening line seems to indicate that it was written in 1902. It is in the easy handwriting of Sherman D. Thacher and is obviously the first draft of an article produced at the request of the editor of *El Archivero*, the School's yearbook.

"One of the most striking facts in the history of the Thacher School (it begins) is the naturalness of its growth during the thirteen years of its life. When it began no one knew even that it was to be a school, and as it has put on new growth each year no one could foretell what the full grown institution was to be.

"In the fall of 1889 Professor Henry W. Farnam of the Sheffield Scientific School asked Mr. Thacher if he would receive his nephew Henry Farnam at Casa de Piedra for a year of out of door life combined with study in preparation for college. Thus the first Thacher School boy came and the first teaching among the hills and brush land began.

"Mr. Thacher had come to California for the health of a younger brother in 1887, and sought Ojai Valley because Mr. Edward Thacher was already settled there at Topa Topa Ranch. Mr. Sherman Thacher soon took up as a government claim the 160 acres of the present school location, cleared some of the brush and rocks from the land, set out five acres of oranges, planted some potatoes, sowed some barley and built a little redwood house to live in till the oranges should make his fortune. Mrs. Thomas Thacher and Miss Thacher came out in 1888. In 1890 Miss Thacher was married at the ranch to Mr. William Kent. Madam Thacher has continued to live here.

"In 1890-91 five boys applied for admission, insisting that the ranch should be turned into a school. The next year Mr. Thacher formally announced 'an experienced teacher, graduate of Yale, will receive a few boys on his ranch on the foothills above Ojai Valley in Ventura County, California, and fit them for college.'

"In 1891-92 eleven boys were received, little buildings going up to accommodate them, and the following advertisement appeared: 'Out of Door Life and Study for Boys. The Casa de Piedra Ranch School, Sherman D. Thacher, Headmaster, Ojai Valley, Nordhoff, California.'"

While the manuscript is too lengthy to be printed in its entirety in the *Quarterly*, its first two pages quoted above omit some interesting and colorful details.

Sherman Day Thacher was 25 years old when he arrived in Ojai Valley in 1887. His father, lately deceased, was Prof. Thomas A.





Young Henry Farnam was fascinated by the view of Ojai Valley. Here is the School in 1898, three years after the first big fire.

Thacher, for 44 years a member of the faculty at Yale. Prof. Thacher's first wife had been the daughter of President Day of Yale. Left a widower with five children (Edward was one of these) in 1860 he married Elizabeth Baldwin Sherman, the granddaughter of Roger Sherman(1), a signer of the Declaration of Independence. They had four children: Sherman, Elizabeth (Bessie), William and George.

Sherman entered Yale at 17, graduating in 1883. He enrolled in Yale Law School the following year and in 1886 went out to Kansas City to practice law. Soon he was joined by Horace Taft, a close friend and the brother of William Howard Taft. Horace was eager to establish a private school in Kansas. Both men had tutored from time to time but Sherman was unable to work up much enthusiasm over his friend's idea. However, he was also unable to find much interest in practicing law. Horace returned east to establish, some years later, the well-known Taft School at Watertown, Conn. Not long after his departure, Sherman went back to New Haven.

Soon after his arrival home it was decided that he should take his ailing brother out to California. As George's heart could not have stood the crossing of the Rockies, they went by sea. Landing in San Francisco, they spent some days with their friends the Kents and visited some of Sherman's cousins in Berkeley where they met the Blakes, formerly of New Haven. Eliza Blake was then fifteen.



Their visits concluded, they boarded the train for Santa Barbara via the San Joaquin Valley. As Anson S. Thacher recalls his father's telling of the story, the Southern Pacific station in Santa Barbara in the fall of 1887 was a box car on a siding in the glaring sun. The two brothers, looking tired and seedy, trudged up State Street and crossed over to the Upham Hotel, where a cool and lofty room clerk surveyed their cinder-flecked faces and dusty clothes and sniffed, "We don't take transients!" (2) Sherman and George found another hostelry and next day started the long ride over Casitas Pass (3). They arrived in Ojai Valley on Hallowe'en, 1887.

And as the dust-caked stage turned into the haven of shade beneath the great trees of Oak Glen Cottages, B. W. Gally, Prop., there came to a close the most significant three months in the life of the sandy-haired young man who sprang to the ground to be greeted by his sunburned, "westernized" brother Ed. For in the brief period August-October, 1887, Sherman Thacher had definitely forsaken the practice of law, had traveled from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Pacific, had renewed contact with William Kent who was to become his brother-in-law and whose family was more than once to come to the rescue of the School when bad fires had plunged it into financial difficulties, had met Eliza Blake, his future wife, and had found the quiet little valley which was to afford him at once a home and a successful career.

The quarter section homestead had been filed on in 1885 by George E. Stewart, whose half-page real estate ads in *The Ojai* in 1891 no doubt paid the paper bill of the fledgling weekly. Stewart had lost interest in proving up the boulder-and-chaparral strewn alluvial fan at the east end of the Valley. Sherman Thacher offered to buy his rights for \$25 plus the government price of \$1.25 an acre. Afterwards he was wont to boast that title to the land had been held by only three great powers: Mexico, the United States and S. D. Thacher.

With the help of half a dozen Chinese he began to clear the land and set out the beginnings of what is today one of the finest orange orchards in the Valley. But the boulders made it slow going and the small spring on the property furnished hardly enough water for the horses, let alone for irrigation.

Edward Thacher was manager of Topa Topa Ranch. At the time of Sherman and George's arrival several men were living up there, including George Bald and J. J. Burke. There was also a Mr. Kelsey who helped Sherman build the three room redwood house, the lumber for which, of course, had to be hauled by team from San Buenaventura.

The money for all this—the land, the house, the young trees, the laborers—came from William Larned Thacher who loaned Sherman \$4,000, for Sherman was so short of funds that he did a long day's work on the roads to pay his \$2 poll tax. William had acquired \$5,000 by a method easier (on himself, at least) than appearing on a TV



quiz show; he acquired it simply by being born. The childless widow of Prof. Larned, one of Prof. Thacher's closest friends at Yale, had offered to give \$5,000 and her husband's collection of books to a baby son of the Thachers if he were named for her husband. The offer was made at the time of Sherman's birth but pride in the family name prevailed, so the second son got the \$5,000.

Prof. Farnam, whose nephew was the first student ("scholar" in those days) was, of course, an old Yale friend. Old Yale friends—and they were, and still are, legion—have always played an important role in the School. Anson S. Thacher, who is at present Business Manager and William S. McCaskey, Director of Studies, are Yale graduates. Yale has always been represented on the faculty, and the school has prepared hundreds of boys for Yale. But never on such terms as S. D. Thacher, who was more interested in oranges and olives than in students, made for Henry Farnam: Board, \$10 per week; tutoring, \$2 per week; horse, if any, \$2 per week; allowance for Henry's labor, \$4 per week; washing extra.

The only thing about those terms which has a familiar ring today is "washing extra." The provision for Henry's labor turned out to be extremely liberal, for Henry found the panoramic view of the Valley utterly fascinating—especially when gazed upon while seated on a rock which he should have been unseating with a crowbar.

Henry's house at Thacher's was a stone house on which Sherman and Bessie and the admirable Mr. Kelsey labored mightily after the agreement had been made with Prof. Farnam. It is believed that this was the first "living rock" house in the county, rock houses being somewhat more difficult to stick together than adobe ones. Most of the walls of this one stuck together wonderfully well during the School's first big fire. They later served as part of a barn which, following a subsequent fire in 1939, was completely razed as a hazard.

The stone house was appropriately named Casa de Piedra and Henry moved into it in September, 1889. S. D. Thacher named his ranch after it, Casa de Piedra Ranch, and so today the full name of the School is The Thacher School at Casa de Piedra Ranch and undergraduates are known as Casa de Piedrans. So, too, the School colors derive from the ranch: Orange for the oranges and green for the olives.

Mrs. Thomas A. Thacher, to be known in the Valley for many years as Madam Thacher, and Bessie had hurried out to California in 1888 upon news that George was failing. He died the following spring and Ojai's George Thacher Memorial Library is a monument to his memory; typical of the Thacher family's New England brand of common sense, it is a monument for the perpetuation of the young man's memory by benefiting the living.

In 1939, in his Semi-Centennial Address, A. Crawford Greene, then a member of the Corporation and a former teacher, capably portrayed the contemporary situation:



"At this time (1889) the town was called Nordhoff. Its main street was the one you see today. It had a population of about 300. Its connection with the outside world was by road to Ventura, precarious and uncertain in times of winter rains. Transportation in the Valley itself was rough and very dusty. Cultivation had started in earnest.

"In those days of the late '80's California had been no more than scratched. Its total population was only a little over one million. The University of California had 291 students. Stanford University had yet to graduate its first class. The coast railroad had not yet been completed. There was no telephone in Ojai Valley, there were no electric lights(4)—in the nation Cleveland was the outstanding figure. Theodore Roosevelt was in his early thirties. The Boer War and our own Spanish War were years ahead. The road was still wide in California for courageous pioneers."

Of the five boys who "applied for admission" in 1890-91, two were from the east; Horatio Newcombe and Henry Thacher, 9-year-old son of Sherman's brother James. The others were Ventura County lads; Nathan Blanchard of Santa Paula, Rex Shearer of San Buenaventura and Ernest R. Hill from the area that was soon to be the new town of Oxnard. (Charles C. Perkins of Hueneme and Cary Burke were a few years later.)

In the spring of 1891 Ernest and Horatio borrowed horses and pack mules and made an overnight trip to the Sespe, forerunners of a stream of Thacher School campers who have ridden trail in the Ojai backcountry for nearly three-quarters of a century. Accompanied by Samuel Knight, a Yale graduate who was visiting S. D. Thacher, they crossed the mountains by way of Senior Canyon and camped at the Harrow Ranch, where Mr. Harrow entertained them with a glowing account of the future of the Sespe. But it was not until 1908 that Mrs. Harry M. Hunt took charge of the horse program. Mrs. Hunt, the sister of Sheriff Bob Clark and Supervisor Tom Clark, achieved nation-wide fame for her ability to manage horses(5) and for some 30 years Thacher campers were to marvel at her skill.

The advertisement "Out of Door Life and Study for Boys" actually ran on for some length. It was printed on a single folded sheet. In describing what he had to offer, the copywriter leaned heavily on extracurricular aspects: "The place has not been given the title of school. While it is a school as far as progress in study goes, it is hoped that it will always preserve distinctly the more normal life of a household and ranch . . . The houses are simple ranch houses, but new and comfortable with fireplace or stove in each room. The water supply is brought directly from a spring in the mountains. The life is a healthy one, out-of-doors the year round—night as well as day in the warmer weather—with ample opportunities for hunting, fishing, riding and learning something of the work of orange and olive





"Aunt Delia" Torrey, President Taft's favorite aunt, Mrs. Morgan Barnes, Madam Thacher and Mrs. Alphonso Taft, mother of President Taft. This picture was taken at the School in 1904 when William H. Taft was Secretary of War.

ranches(6)—an object constantly in view is to help a boy toward the simplest way of living a happy, useful life—with other people."

Gone were the days of \$12 a week, less \$4 for labor, for board and tuition. "Terms are \$650 per annum . . . this includes instruction, board, washing, fire and light. There are no extra charges except for horse keeping." Later washing again became an extra.

The washing, of course, was done by Chinese. In the early days Chinese were hired because white servants in Ojai Valley were scarce. But S. D. Thacher continued to have them by choice until, as Leroy McKim Makepeace points out in his "Sherman Thacher and His School," they have become as much a part of the School as the mountains and the horses.

But they were sometimes a puzzlement. Less than a month before the fall term of 1894, S. D. Thacher learned from Gin Hung, headman of the domestic staff, that Ock, a houseboy, had broken his leg and perhaps would be unable to return to the School. A few days later he had a second communication from San Francisco written by a professional Chinese letter writer:



"Dear S D Thacher I received your letter you want me and Hing to come back to Nordhoff ocother 1st ock cant come get you another boys now I wat for the ocother 1st how ock his leg he can come ock come ock not come I get you one good man can do wash and ion if you like yours truly Gin Hung."

Punctuated, this letter made ample sense to the Headmaster as indeed does to this day the tradition of using only Chinese in the School's kitchen. For not only have they been faithful, competent and clean but also nearly 70 years have passed without a single case of theft by a Chinese servant. Quong, present head of the staff, has been at the School for 43 years.

When Gin Hung and his crew returned to the School in the fall of 1894 they discovered to their surprise that it had become co-educational. There was as yet no high school in Nordhoff(7) and the Headmaster, who now had Oliver Bronson, a Yale graduate, as a full time teacher in addition to the part time teaching of his brother Edward, had offered to prepare Jacqueline, daughter of the late Prof. Newton, for the entrance examinations of the University of California. But there were other girls in the Valley of high school age, so he inserted a notice in *The Ojai* stating that classes for girls would be opened at the nominal charge of 25c apiece for each lesson.

Thus Gertrude Hobart, Mary Gibson, Ethel Doeg and Jacqueline Newton had the distinction of being the only girls to attend The Thacher School. They were day pupils and their classes were held separately, never with the boys'. In June, 1895, Jacqueline was ready for her examinations and, as one of the Chinese put it, "The girl, he not come any more."

There are no longer day students at the School but for many years boys who lived in the Valley were accepted. During the first 15 years the list included the Barrows boys, Austen and Philip Pierpont (who lived just down the road at Overlook, now known as Pierpont Cottages), Denham Lord, Walter Hughes, Guy Stetson, Truman Gridley, C. H. D. Carne, Alexander and Shirley McAndrews, Ralph Pirie, Charles and D. F. Baker, R. S. Daniels, John and R. P. Stephenson, Kilbourne and Ben Gally and Stuart Slosson.

In 1895 William Larned Thacher, the family capitalist who had been a top-flight tennis player at Yale and was to become the founder of the Ojai Valley Tennis Tournament, joined the faculty. He arrived only a few months before the School suffered its worst disaster.

On June 17 the term had ended but there were still some of the boys around helping to close the School or waiting for their parents. William had gone to Santa Barbara, probably to find a tennis game; Madam Thacher was packing for a trip east and the Headmaster was looking forward to a visit to San Francisco, there to give the Yale entrance examinations and, no doubt, visit the Kents and the Blakes, including Eliza.



That night the boys slept on the piazza. At one o'clock one of them awoke and saw flames in the kitchen. He gave the alarm but there was a mild east wind blowing and only a dribble of water in the pipe from Chicken Coop Canyon. The crackling flames did their work in less than half an hour.

Next day *The Ojai* reported that "Casa de Piedra . . . and the settlement of buildings that marked the location of Mr. Thacher's Ranch School are in ashes excepting the barn, the sentinel-like chimneys and the blackened stone walls of the school building which gave the place its name." It is estimated that the loss was between \$12,000 and \$20,000, with \$4,000 insurance. The owner's estimate was considerably lower, \$7,000.

But no one knew better than Sherman Day Thacher that a school is more than its buildings. From the Kents came immediate offers of financial aid and from Santa Barbara an offer for him to begin anew over there. Nordhoff was both sympathetic and concerned, for S. D. Thacher had become the leading citizen of the Valley and his school was bringing business to the town. Before he left for San Francisco he settled all rumors by announcing that he would rebuild on his ranch.

There were a few prosperous families in Ojai Valley during the nineties but most of the residents were in very modest circumstances. Many of the inhabitants had come to the Valley for their health, for in addition to the dry climate it was thought by some that the tar seepage in Upper Ojai and on Sulphur Mountain made the valley air healthful.

Except for the Baker residence (now Clausen's Funeral Home) and a few other elegant places, the average house was an extremely modest board-and-batten structure. Just about every house had its own shallow well and there was usually a milch cow staked out in the adjacent vacant lot. As Mr. Greene pointed out, Main Street was where it is today but it was unpaved, there was no Arcade and the sidewalks were plank. A few blocks from Main Street the residential streets became wagon ruts or mere trails leading off into the brush and, of course, there were no sidewalks at all, a condition which to a large extent has remained unchanged to this day.

Money in Nordhoff was even more scarce than water at the east end of the Valley. There was a trickle from the farmers and a trickle from the winter tourists and a couple of small freshets, one in June when the parents came to take their boys home from the School and the other in September when they came to put them back in again.

Nevertheless, to show their appreciation of S. D. Thacher's decision, The Valley folks raised several hundred dollars and those who could not give *dinero* gave their *trabajo* and a road was built straight from Spader's corner on up the hill to the School. Spader's place is now the Hendrickson ranch at the southeast corner of McNell Road and Thacher Road.





"The Golden Chariot" with outriders bound for church in the village on a Sunday morning. Circa 1900.

There had been a road of sorts zigzagging through the brush and boulders, of course. But the new one was a dandy; it not only conquered those pesky washes but it was wide enough for two buggies to pass without scraping hubs.

With financial assistance of friends and relatives, S. D. Thacher was able to open the School for the fall term. But fires remained a constant hazard. A brush fire seriously threatened in 1903, another in 1909 burnt all but one of the boys' shacks(8) in Thacher Canyon. The following year another hot-stove fire destroyed the Main Building and several others; up until 10 years ago a fire in one of the hay barns seemed to be almost a cherished tradition. But the great Ojai Valley conflagrations of 1917, 1932 and 1948 never reached the School.

During the succeeding decades ample plant was gradually acquired; ample at least, for the simple, level-headed type of living that is the mark of the School. Pretentiousness has always been an unwelcome stranger at Casa de Piedra Ranch.

Sherman Day Thacher passed away in 1931. On May 21, 1924, he had turned the School over to a non-profit corporation. Richard Bard was its first President and George Farrand, who had helped set it up, was on its Board, as was Dr. Robert Milliken, President of



California Institute of Technology. Today Allen L. Chickering, Jr., a Thacher alumnus, is President. Dr. J. Wallace Sterling, President of Stanford University, has taken the place of the late Dr. Milliken and the Board is studded with the names of former Casa de Piedrans. Currently, Stanford has edged out Yale in the number of Thacher boys admitted. While the enrollment has grown somewhat in recent years, there seems to be no desire to make it a "big" school and the ratio of teachers to students remains at about one to six.

Most of the boys are Californians but during the past six years 21 other states have been represented, as well as Hawaii, Argentina, Austria, Burma, Canada, Norway, Peru and the Philippines.

Evidence of the stability of the institution is to be found in the fact that in the nearly 70 years of the School's history there have been only four headmasters: Sherman D. Thacher, Dr. Morgan Barnes, Anson S. Thacher and Newton K. Chase, brother of novelist Mary Ellen Chase. Newton Chase (a graduate not of Yale but of Bowdoin) became Headmaster in 1949 when Anson Thacher assumed the business management of the School. The Thacher family is also represented on the administrative staff by Elizabeth Thacher, who has been Office Manager since 1936.

In the school year but recently ended there were 107 boys accepted from the long list of applicants. The fee for tuition and residence was \$2,100, with horsekeep estimated from \$160 to \$200 depending upon the price of hay—a far cry from Henry Farnam's expenses. Washing was not included and there were additional fees, rather beyond the "25c apiece," for music, art and other programs outside the basic curriculum. There were, however, many scholarships, including one for a foreign student, and the School's endowment totaled over \$500,000. The Corporation operated on a \$223,300 budget, of which basic student fees accounted for \$209,175. Although the goal is to break even, in 1955-56 there was a \$4,000 deficit.

This would perhaps have pleased S. D. Thacher, who never cared much about money. In 1914 he had written to Horace Taft, "My debt of \$30,000 would seem small to you, but so would my net income—it does to me. What fun it is not to have everything you want." And it was not until June, 1922, that he was able to write to his brother William, "A great day! Out of debt—after 60 years."

For the important thing at the School has not changed since he expressed it in his first advertisement back in 1892: "An object constantly in view is to help a boy toward the simplest way of living a happy, useful life—with other people."

#### NOTES

1. Roger Sherman was the only founding father to sign four historic documents of American independence: The Association of 1774, The Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. But his

greatest achievement was his part in bringing about the "Connecticut Compromise" concerning the structure of Congress.

2. Anson Thacher recalls that when he was a boy, his father made it a point to take the whole family (there were six children) to the Upham as definite proof that he wasn't a "transient."

3. "With a good horse or team the trip (to Santa Barbara) is easily made in a day and will some day be made in an hour over a railroad through the Casitas." (*The Ojai*, Nov. 25, 1891)

4. More than two years were to pass before *The Ojai* (Nov. 3, 1891) proudly printed a squib about electricity, although it concerned a neighboring community: "The Union Oil Company of Santa Paula is putting an electric light in their refinery."

5. Leonard Bacon in his autobiography (Harpers, 1930) wrote concerning an interlude in Wyoming: "A man (Rivers Browne) of high breeding and instinctive delicacy, he had been a cowboy for 20 years and had carried horsemanship to a point where, not merely an art, it was a philosophy . . . To see him get on a bad actor, whether timid or vicious, was to witness the extreme of virtuosity. I have known no other man and only one woman who was fit to hold a candle to him. The remarkable Mrs. Hunt of the Ojai might fairly lay claim to an equal understanding of horses."

6. "E. S. Thacher has under cultivation some 40 acres (of olives) himself and from 20 to 30 acres for Eastern parties. He is a great student of the olive and thinks the olive has a great future in Ojai." (*The Ojai*, Nov. 25, 1891)

7. The curriculum at Nordhoff Elementary was sometimes curiously augmented, however. "The study of comparative anatomy, with a wildcat as subject, was on the program at Nordhoff School this week." (*The Ojai*, Nov. 18, 1891)

8. These shacks are school tradition of a rather important order. They are more or less ramshackle clubhouses where a group of boys can go to shoot the breeze and sometimes cook up a meal. Today they dot the hill back of the School. A graduating Upper Upper (Senior) sells his equity to a Lower Schooler (Freshman).

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Editor's note: The above notes are by the author, Mr. Basil McGann. For some 25 years Mr. McGann has been a neighbor of The Thacher School. In the mid-1930's he published a monthly periodical devoted primarily to Ventura County historical articles. At the present time he is completing a novel, KATE BRANNAN, the locale of which is a fictitious valley in Santa Barbara County near the Ventura County line. Publication date for Mr. McGann's book is next spring.



# The Saticoy Regulators

By CHAS. F. OUTLAND

Many years ago, before the advent of the automobile, an elderly man and his young companion were returning from a fishing trip to Hueneme. As they traveled along what is now Vineyard Avenue, the older man turned to the other and said, "George, do you see the large limb sticking out on that sycamore tree over there?"

"Yes", replied the boy.

"Well, I once saw three men hanging from that limb."

"What did you do with their saddles, Uncle Jeff?" asked the boy.

There was no reply from the distinguished looking gentleman with the long white beard and twinkling eyes.

"I said, what did you do with their saddles, Uncle Jeff?"

The question by the inquisitive young man was never answered.

This intriguing little story was told to the writer by the same boy (now a man of advanced years, of course) who had put the question to Uncle Jeff so many years before; and had been prompted by a query of what he knew about the Saticoy Regulators. Our interest had been aroused by a short article in *History of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties*, Chicago, 1917, that stated—"In the eighties horse-stealing became so prevalent in the county that the farmers and citizens united in an effort to put down the nuisance. At Saticoy was organized on March 21, 1885 what was known as The Saticoy Regulators." A list of the members followed. A check with some of the sons and daughters of this membership roster proved to be quite enlightening. Some 90% had never even heard of the organization. The remainder told some interesting stories about the Regulators that they remembered hearing as youngsters. Here is a typical version:

"The Saticoy Regulators? Why yes, I've heard of them. They were also called the 'Blue Feathers' because they always wore a feather from a bluejay in the brim of their hats for identification. They were a very active organization and executed a large number of horse-thieves and cattle rustlers. Their operations were not confined to the Saticoy area but covered a much broader range. One of the most notorious affairs in which they were involved occurred in Carpinteria where they hung a man and his 14 year old son for stealing horses. Some doubt was expressed as to the wisdom of hanging the boy, but the general consensus of opinion was that he was a shrewder thief than the old man and was, therefore, dispatched. The Saticoy Regulators? Son, they were a — of a tough crowd."

Another sample of the legends associated with the Regulators is almost as gory:

"Yes, the Saticoy Regulators were a mean lot. They had to be to clean up the cattle rustling and horse stealing that went on in those



days. They were often called the 'Blue Tails', the members wearing tail feathers from bluejays in their hats to identify themselves. I remember a man telling me that when he was a boy he heard his father leave the house one night and ride off rapidly on his big white horse. The lad's curiosity got the better of him. He dressed hastily, saddled another horse and followed. The boy saw his father join a group of mounted men down by the Santa Clara River and ride off with the others in a southeasterly direction. Soon they came to a lonely farmhouse and called for the owner to come out. Only a few words were exchanged, but when the riders left the man was hanging from the limb of a tree with his feet off the ground. These Regulators were plenty mean. They never talked and their secrets went with them to the grave."

Such stories as these make for delightful listening around the fire while the marshmallows are roasting; but, unfortunately, there is not one shred of evidence to support them, at least as far as the Regulators are concerned. The contemporary newspaper accounts tell an entirely different story. The *Ventura Free Press* published a letter from the secretary of the Regulators on February 12, 1885:

"Ed. Free Press—The horse thief society known as Saticoy Regulators met at their annual meeting and elected A. M. Peters, President; H. Baker, Vice-President; J. T. Criss, Sec-Treas.; J. L. Crane, Captain; Chas. Duval, 1st. Lieut., E. C. Crane, 2nd. Lieut.

"There was a full attendance of enthusiastic members as there was a number of bright, large, new Colt revolvers placed in the hands of Captain Crane to be distributed among the riders. The society begins to look quite formidable and as though they mean business. Horse thieves had better look a 'leedle out'. There are quite a lot of us ready to follow any thieves that may steal a horse from any member of this society, also \$100 reward for the conviction of a thief, to the person or persons arresting such. Mr. T. C. Farwell and James Kelsey were received as members. The way the big silver dollars rolled in looked as though the thieves would be caught if money could do it. It has been organized more than one and a half years and not one horse stolen since that time. Each member will be fined \$5 if he neglects to keep a written description of all his horses. A fine of \$1 is also imposed upon a member failing to attend any meeting."

On June 12, 1885 the *Free Press* stated:

"The Saticoy Regulators are fully organized and the horse thief who comes within their bounds will fare badly. They offer a standing reward for every conviction. They have twelve riders, well armed, and money enough to defray the expense of pursuing thieves and bringing them to justice. Their semi-annual meetings are held the first Saturday in February and the second Saturday in September, the admission fee being two dollars."



The reader will note that the date of organization as given in *History of Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties* is obviously in error as the *Free Press* account of February 12, 1885 states the society had been in existence for more than a year and a half. What is more significant is the statement in the same article that since that date NOT ONE HORSE HAD BEEN STOLEN. It should be obvious that if there have been no horses stolen there can be no horse thieves hanged.

There is no finer source of "cold water" with which to quench the overly heated tales of those who gild the lily than the contemporary newspaper files. It should be noted that after the *Ventura Signal* commenced publication in April, 1871, not one instance of vigilante action, insofar as cattle rustlers or horse thieves were concerned, ever appeared in its columns. One lynching did occur during this period, however. In 1873 one George Hargan became embroiled in a boundary dispute with a neighbor, George Martin, on land that they leased from T. R. Bard. In the fracas Hargan killed Martin with a heavy load of buckshot. While Acting Coroner W. D. Hobson was holding an inquest, a group of thirty men took Hargan from his place of confinement and hung him from a large sycamore tree. This affair, of course, took place some ten years before the organization of the Regulators, and appears to have been a spontaneous, rather than an organized, vigilante action.

In spite of the many wild and sordid stories concerning them, one must arrive at the inevitable conclusion that at no time after their formation in 1883 did the Regulators ever resort to vigilante action. With two newspapers in Ventura no such action could have escaped the record. Their own press release of February 12, 1885 shows that they intended to follow legal methods in that they offered a reward for the CONVICTION of any thief. The *Ventura Vidette* of February 11, 1890 repeats this same theme in an article that states:

"The gentlemen composing the 'Saticoy Regulators' are among our best citizens, and have for their objective the detection and apprehension of horse thieves and other persons charged with any crime or misdemeanor. The object of the organization, however, is more especially for the prevention of horse-stealing. They are doing a good work."

A glance at the membership roster at the end of this article will sustain the statement, "The gentlemen composing the Saticoy Regulators are among our best citizens, . . ." It should be sufficient in itself to establish the fact that the Regulators were not vigilantes.

Despite the clarification of this point, there are many questions that remain unanswered. How can the discrepancies between the facts as revealed in early newspaper accounts and the stories handed down from father to son, and told in all sincerity, be explained? In some cases, such as the Carpinteria lynching, it is an easy matter to find

the true story. This notorious affair is on record for any one who wishes to read it. It actually happened in 1859, almost a quarter of a century before the Regulators were organized (1), and involved John Nidever and two of his sons. Another son, Jacob, was later one of the early settlers in Ventura County, but his name does not appear on any of the membership lists of the Regulators.

Some of the rope-stretching yarns, such as the one with which we began this article, are more difficult to explain. The task is not made any easier by reason of the fact that between the years of 1858 and 1868 there were no newspapers published in Santa Barbara, and the record fades badly during this period. Further, it is precisely this decade that seems to have needed stern measures to deal with the many renegades present in the district. Certainly from all available evidence there was little if any need for an armed organization in 1883 to enforce law and order.

In questioning the descendants of the Regulators, one startling fact emerged—the only two who had ever heard them referred to as “Blue Tails,” or “Blue Feathers,” were men whose California ancestry dated to the 1850’s or earlier. The natural question that comes to mind is—Was there an earlier version of the Regulators using the same name, with some of the members also belonging to the later organization? And, if there was such a group, were they the ones that utilized the tail feathers of the bluejay for identification purposes? If so, it would seem quite possible that vigilante “sins” of an earlier day had somehow become confused, and that the Saticoy Regulators have been credited by some narrators with a record they do not deserve.

#### NOTE

1. The best account of this notorious lynching will be found in *A County Judge in Arcady* by Cameron Rogers. See also Bancroft’s *Popular Tribunals*, Vol I.

#### MEMBERSHIP ROSTER OF THE SATICOY REGULATORS

John Alexander	James Evans	Mr. Morgan
J. O. Alexander	T. C. Farwell	R. G. Pardee
H. W. Baker	G. W. Faulkner	W. E. Ready
W. B. Baker	T. G. Gabbert	W. D. F. Richards
E. K. Bither	A. M. Graham	S. B. Rose
David Brown	Thomas Harwood	J. M. Sharp
E. C. Crane	O. F. Hawley	William Slinger
G. G. Crane	Will Graham	N. H. Spencer
J. L. Crane	E. E. Huntley	G. A. Smith
I. T. Criss	Joseph Kelsey	A. T. Steele
J. F. Cummings	C. M. Kimball	William Suytar
David Darling	T. J. Knox	A. Walton
John Darling	James McClure	C. T. Wason
J. M. Dickenson	J. D. Carty	H. P. Webb
Charles Duval	J. K. Meyers	M. F. Wells
E. A. Duval	Monroe Miller	A. M. Peters



# Springville

By J. H. MORRISON

Springville, Ventura County, is only a memory. Today, the township is devoted to the raising of beans, walnuts and citrus; the Baptist Church erected by Rev. W. O. Wood in 1879 was razed a few years ago and there is nothing to mark the location of what was a promising little town in the 1870's and 1880's, even through the middle nineties. So many inquiries regarding Springville come to the Pioneer Museum that a short account of its history may not be out of place.

Springville was located upon the extreme western end of a triangular piece of land which contained about one thousand acres and was, because of its shape, known as "the gore." It was bounded on the north by Rancho Las Posas, on the south by La Colonia, on the west by Rancho del Norte and on the east by Rancho Calleguas. By some accident this section escaped the limits of the Land Grants, thus throwing this rich district open to immediate settlement as Federal land. The townsite was a part of a ninety acre farm owned by John Sebastian, and lay approximately half a mile east of the present junction of U.S. Highway 101 and Central Avenue. While we have it in mind it is probably safe to say that the name "Springville" was given the settlement because of its proximity to Rancho Las Posas (the Ranch of the Springs) which contained a number of flowing springs.

It is difficult to definitely assign a date for the founding of the town. Christian Borchard settled on La Colonia in 1867; W. A. Hughes, Arnold and others came in 1868 and 1869, so possibly a need was felt by 1870 for a general store, a blacksmith shop, etc. and the town, like Topsy, just grew. In 1873 the Conejo Grade road was surveyed and built by Ventura County, and the stage station, which stood at about the junction of del Norte and Santa Clara Avenues, was moved to Springville when the mainline stage route was changed from Santa Susana to Conejo. Whether this move was made because Springville was a growing community at the time, or whether the move made it a growing community, we do not know. However by 1878 according to the *Ventura Signal*, there were two mercantile stores, a blacksmith shop, a comfortable hotel, a restaurant and two feed stables. According to the *Signal*; "Springville enjoys great advantages as a trading place of the ranchos Conejo, Las Posas, Simi, Tapo, Calleguas and Guadaluasca."

Santa Clara Water and Irrigating Ditch Company was formed in 1871 with an appropriation of 2700 inches of water. This ditch was taken out of the Santa Clara River about ten miles north of Springville, passed through the Schiappa Pietra (del Norte) ranch, through Springville, and extended some six miles to the south through La Colonia.



Baptist Church at Springville.

Barley, corn, sheep and hogs were the principal products, and a few deciduous orchards were set out on a domestic rather than a commercial scale.

With the ending of through stage service in 1887, due to the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad, Saticoy became the trading center of the district and Springville gradually faded from the scene. The establishment of Camarillo about 1900, and the opening of the present Coast Line in 1902, saw the end of Springville; the last enterprise, a blacksmith shop operated by one Peterson, gave up the ghost shortly after the latter date.

The Baptist Church, built by W. O. (Parson) Wood in 1879, was in use for some thirty years. For another thirty years it stood unused (though occupied by a man named Methuen) before it was razed, thus wiping out the last vestige of Springville. So Springville joined Epworth, Fremontville, Duneden, Cienega and Sespe as vanished Ventura County settlements.



# Privately Printed Books and Pamphlets

By CHAS. F. OUTLAND

Among the more interesting books pertinent to the history of any region are those that are privately printed and distributed and that are not offered for sale to the public. As a general rule these take the form of reminiscences of the author; although occasionally, as in Cleland's *The Place Called Sespe*, the field is broader. Frequently the privately printed book is written only for distribution to the family and a few intimate friends, and often the author does not even bother to secure a copyright. As a result, books containing historical information of considerable value often pass unnoticed for years by librarians and bibliographers. The following list of books of this class is of particular interest to Ventura County. It is submitted as a typical cross-section rather than a complete listing.

*In Memorium, A. A. Glasscock, M.D.* By Cephas L. Bard, M.D. 1901. 4pp.

Dr. Bard paid glowing tribute to his colleague in the medical profession little realizing that in less than a year he, too, would fall victim of the same disease that killed Glasscock, cancer. Dr. Glasscock was the father of Carl Glasscock, the well known writer of many Western books.

*The Place Called Sespe: The History of a California Ranch.* By Robert G. Cleland. Privately Printed, 1940.

Both the book and the author are too well known to need comment here. A recent reprint has made this splendid work more readily available.

*Album of Memories.* By Wendell Daily. Camarillo, California 1946. 254 pp.

Mr. Daily's reminiscences cover an area of the county that has not been written about too extensively. It is a welcome addition to the historical library of Ventura County.

*The History and Reminiscences of San Buenaventura.* By Edith M. Hobson and Myrtle Shepherd Francis. [n.d. circa 1912] 15pp.

The short history of San Buenaventura was written by Edith Hobson (Mrs. Walter Hoffman Jr.) and the reminiscences of the town in its early days by Myrtle Francis. This interesting little pamphlet has become quite scarce.

*The Foster Family, California Pioneers 1849.* [Compiled by Lucy Foster Sexton.] 1925. 285 pp.

This work is scarce, although it is actually a reprint of the very rare San Jose edition of 1889 with added material. The day by day accounts of three overland journeys are given plus an account of a fourth trip via the Isthmus of Panama. Family letters, and stories

of early days in Ventura County add to the local historical value of the book. Robert Ernest Cowan, dean of California bibliographers, often stated that books of this type contained much of interest, and it was regrettable that they were printed in such small editions as to be inaccessible to the average reader. The Ventura County Library has a copy of the 1925 edition and at least one of the original Foster journals.

*Early Recollections.* By James Meikle Sharp. Title page reads: Brief account of the Experiences of James Meikle Sharp. 1931. 72 pp.

Mr. Sharp, or "J. M." as he was affectionately known to his many friends, accompanied his parents as a boy of four on the overland journey over the Oregon Trail in 1851. In writing about this trip the author has quoted extensively from the diary his mother kept on the journey. Early days of hardship in Oregon are recalled, along with later experiences as a schoolteacher, bank accountant, etc. He came to Ventura County in 1876, settling first on a tract of land seven miles north of Ventura and later on the ranch in the Santa Clara Valley that is still owned by his descendants. The only criticisms to be offered on his book are the rather abrupt ending and the omission of many interesting stories of early Ventura County that he could have told. 200 copies were printed for private distribution.

*Fifty Years a Rancher.* The Recollections of Half a Century Devoted to the Citrus and Walnut Industries of California and Furthering the Cooperative Movement in Agriculture. By Charles Collins Teague. Los Angeles, California. 1944. XIV, 199 pp.

An important book. Without question the author was the outstanding authority in the field of agriculture in California during the fifty years covered, and thousands of farmers are still benefiting from the cultural and marketing practices that were initiated by Mr. Teague. Future historians will probably always regret that he did not take more time from his admittedly arduous duties to compile a fuller account of his experiences. Mr. Teague states in his foreword that 2500 copies were printed and sent to "relatives, friends and associates in my various activities." A second edition was printed for, and distributed by, the California Walnut Growers Association.

*Day Before Yesterday.* By Grace Sharp Thille. Santa Paula, California. 1952. 160 pp.

Mrs. Thille has effectively rounded out the story begun by her father in his *Early Recollections*; and though there is some slight duplication, the two books complement each other nicely. Together they give an American family history from the days of the prairie schooner to the age of aircraft. 200 copies were printed for private distribution.



## Acknowledgements

Acting upon the theory that it is "Better late than never" the editor of the *Quarterly* wishes to acknowledge the valuable assistance rendered from time to time by various members of the Ventura County Historical Society, as well as by our many friends around the state. We trust that our tardiness in the matter will be forgiven. Our thanks then to:

Brooke Sawyer, Jr. for the photograph of the Edwards Adobe used in "The Narrative of Jefferson Crane";

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Special mention should be made of the help furnished by Mr. Bennett and his staff in addressing the May issue of the *Quarterly* and the notices of the Pioneer Picnic. Their timely assistance at a time when Secretary Jack Morrison was suddenly taken ill will long be remembered.

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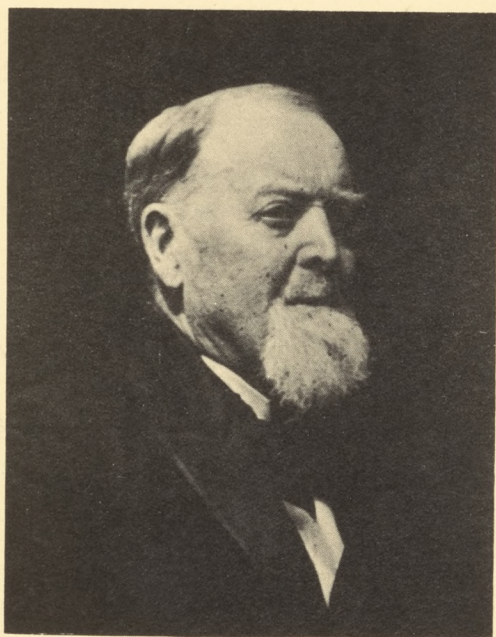
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*The*  
VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*QUARTERLY*



Edward Wilder Haskell

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# *The Ventura County Historical Society*

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# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

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## Edward Wilder Haskell and Oil

Few members of the Ventura County Historical Society will recognize the picture of the pioneer gentleman on the cover of this issue. Edward Wilder Haskell first came to this region in 1864; and, to the best of our knowledge, remained but a few days before returning to his home in San Francisco. During the ensuing forty years there were only two or three times that Mr. Haskell is known to have visited this county. After such casual contact with the area, the reader may well wonder what particular historical importance Mr. Haskell could have for Ventura County. Residents and property owners within the boundaries of the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy should have little trouble recalling his name, however. In almost any document where a legal description of property in the old rancho is necessary, one will find at the end of that description an exception concerning the oil and mineral rights reserved by Edward W. Haskell in 1864. It is doubtful if any single transaction on record in the County Recorder's office was of more lasting importance to so many people as the deed whereby George G. Briggs transferred the oil and mineral rights of the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy to Edward Wilder Haskell.

Our story on the oil rights of the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy is the story of this transaction and the resulting complications over the ensuing years. It is the story of the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company, and of the property owners who fought for years to clear the titles to their land. But most of all this story is one of a true California pioneer, Edward Wilder Haskell, who envisioned great oil wealth beneath the yellow mustard of the Santa Clara Valley, and who was to die many years before that dream was to materialize.

# A History of Oil Rights on the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy

Compiled by the Staff

Courage, foresight, faith in their convictions and dogged perseverance in the face of prolonged adversity, are all attributes that historians have admired in the California pioneers of the mid-nineteenth century. Measured by these standards, Edward Wilder Haskell is rightly deserving of his share of esteem and admiration. Some, however, who read this story may not have a too friendly feeling toward this pioneer, for it was his faith in the oil potential on the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy that was to divorce the surface rights from the oil and mineral rights. But in justice to him it should be understood that he bought and paid for these oil and mineral rights, and the transaction was legal and ethical in every respect. It was no fault of Mr. Haskell that later buyers of the land did not know that they were buying surface rights only.

Edward Wilder Haskell was a Vermonter, born in December, 1819. He was a well educated man for his day, although he had very little formal schooling in his early youth. His mother was his early teacher, and at the age of sixteen he attended Randolph Center Academy. He attended Dartmouth for one year and later became a teacher. Financial reverses forced the family to move westward, and Haskell went to Chicago where he obtained a job in the leather exporting business and taught school on the side. In 1848 Mr. Haskell joined an emigrant train bound for California, and on the trip served as an outrider. Edward Wilder Haskell appears to have been unique among men in that the discovery of gold was of no more than passing interest to him. He took up agricultural pursuits soon after his arrival in California and also became postmaster at Downieville (1). In 1855 Mr. Haskell was married to Marie Antoinette Briggs, who had come to California in 1850 by clipper ship. Soon after the marriage Haskell became associated with the Briggs brothers in raising and supplying fruits and produce for the mines. It was a lucrative business and Haskell shared in the profits.

In January, 1862, George G. Briggs, who appears to have been the genius of the brothers, at least as far as financial matters were concerned, came south and purchased the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy from the More brothers. This, also, was to be made into a fruit growing area by Briggs. The plan, however, never materialized. There are several versions extant as to why Briggs gave up the project, the most prevalent being that the fruit matured too late in the season. His nephew, Jefferson Crane, stated that the death of Briggs' wife was responsible for his decision. Haskell in a letter to his daughter, Helen



(2), states that a veritable avalanche of gophers descended upon the newly planted trees, and Briggs gave up in disgust. Whatever the reason Briggs decided to dispose of the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy.

Haskell had come to the region during this period and was highly impressed with what he saw. The agricultural possibilities were almost unlimited, but what really impressed him was the great oil potential. He pleaded with his brother-in-law to hold on to the property and not sell, arguing that the oil and mineral rights alone were worth more than Briggs intended to sell for. But George Briggs had made up his mind and returned to the north to make arrangements for breaking up the old rancho into small farm-sized holdings. On December 24, 1864, however, he sold to Edward Wilder Haskell all the oil and mineral rights in the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy in perpetuity, and the deed was recorded. The wording in this deed was to become quite important fifty years later in a law suit filed by valley landowners to clear the titles to their properties. The critical passage is given below. The "party of the first part" is George Briggs, and the "party of the second part" is Edward Wilder Haskell:

"That the said party of the first part for, and in consideration of the sum of Five Hundred Dollars to him in hand paid by the said party of the second part, and the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, hath bargained and sold and by these presents doth bargain and sell unto the said party of the second part and to his heirs and assigns forever, all the beds, deposits, lodes, veins and ledges of minerals of every description and all the petroleum and asphaltum situate in upon and within the premises known as the 'Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy' . . . Together with all such rights and privileges as are necessary to give to the said party of the second part the full benefit of this conveyance with the exclusive right to explore, dig and sink wells, pits and shafts for the purpose of obtaining, extracting and appropriating said mineral and substances wherever situate in and upon said premises, with the right to erect houses for workers and all buildings for smelting, refining and working on same . . ."

In consideration of another \$500 Briggs conveyed to Haskell any lands in surplus of four leagues that might be established as having been in the original grant. This odd sounding transaction loses its puzzling features when one reads the original boundaries that were recorded for the rancho: "Commencing at the second barranca toward San Buenaventura" the line is run southeasterly and "passing between the small hills until it strikes the river . . . Thence along the valley of said river . . . to the six elm trees on the right bank of the river . . . From the elms due east to said point of hill top . . . Thence in the same direction . . . along the skirt of the hills until it strikes a small willow or alder tree on the left bank of a small ravine . . ."

Two years after making this transaction with his brother-in-law, George Briggs began selling the land of the rancho through his agent,



G. B. Higgins. Higgins was to have as his profit all money over a specified amount, and is reputed to have made a small fortune on the deal. Briggs and Higgins conveniently overlooked telling the land-hungry settlers anything about the earlier sale of the oil and mineral rights to Haskell, and none of the original recorded deeds mention any exceptions to a clear title in the land. This oversight, like the wording of the Haskell deed was to play an important part in the lawsuit of later years.

With the oil and mineral rights to some 18,000 acres now in his possession, Edward Wilder Haskell set to work attempting to exploit what he felt was an oilfield of major proportions. In all his letters on the subject during the ensuing years this conviction is repeated over and over again. Lacking the necessary finances to undertake the development himself, his efforts were unsuccessfully directed toward interesting outside capital to come into the venture. At no time in the next 35 years does it appear that he considered selling his rights to oil companies, or even to the surface owners themselves. He had set a price on his holdings, however, and it was not exactly a modest one—\$2,000,000. Haskell's philosophy in the matter was quite logical and is typical of the man; if the oil was there, his price was reasonable; if it wasn't there, his holdings were without value whatever.

As late as 1901 when he was over eighty years of age, Haskell was still active in his endeavors to interest outside capital in his ideas. Thirty-seven years of frustration had never changed his opinion that there was oil in vast quantities on the old Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy. In fact, one gathers the impression from reading his letters that the passing of time had only served to strengthen his convictions on the subject, a conviction that was in no manner shared by geologists or producing oil companies of that day. The following letter received by Haskell in 1901 makes this point quite clear:

"Your favor of December 19, was duly received in reference to your ownership of the mineral rights in some 1700(3) acres of the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy. Under the existing conditions in the oil business, we would not care to engage in any new work even if we considered the territory quite promising; but in your case we own only a few lots in Santa Paula and on these we do not regard the oil rights of any value whatever. Therefore we must respectfully decline your proposition.

Yours very truly,

Union Oil Company of California  
W. A. Carney, Secretary"

This is the last available letter received by Haskell on the subject prior to the formation of the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company; and the pessimism expressed by Carney, together with Haskell's advanced age, may have greatly influenced him in making decisions





The Briggs brothers. Standing, Warren, George G., Benjamin.  
Seated, John, Daniel, Silas and Abiel.

that were to result in the formation of that company. Undoubtedly, he now felt the need of assistance from a younger man, for at this time he entrusted part of the labor to his son, Burnette. There is some confusion regarding events leading up to the formation of the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company, but Burnette seems to have been responsible to a great extent. An agreement was drawn up between Edward W. Haskell and Burnette G. Haskell as parties of the first part, and Anthony C. Hellmann and William Morrow as parties of the second part, in which Morrow and Hellmann agreed to pay the Haskells the sum of \$980 in exchange for 49½% of Haskell's oil rights. In return Morrow and Hellmann were to organize a corporation for the purpose of exploiting the oil and mineral rights on the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy. It seems safe to presume that only the urging of Burnette and the prospect of getting drilling operations underway in the immediate future, would have caused Haskell to sign the agreement. That such operations were contemplated, or at least discussed, is borne out by a report he made after visiting the rancho in 1902:

"... I find that the Rancho is surrounded on all sides with producing wells. I feel entirely confident that there must be a vast reservoir of oil underlying some portions of the Valley—but where the oil belt passes I am not prepared to give an opinion at present. . . .

I recommend that the first wells should be sunk upon the extreme eastern portion of the Rancho in the town of Santa Paula."

Haskell's son, Burnette, is the one enigma of this period. A letter he wrote to a "Dear Wheeler" on January 10, 1902, would indicate he was active in attempting to raise the necessary capital to get drilling operations under way:

"... There are for instance 3000 settlers on the ranch now who only have a surface agricultural title. Many of them are anxious to purchase the oil title. The company could be capitalized with the purchase money received for part of the ranch. There is 17,000 acres of it. If you have \$500 to invest to get in on the ground floor I am satisfied you would never regret it. The project is a certainty. I know."

Later, in letters that Edward Wilder Haskell wrote to his daughter, there is more than a little suspicion that Burnette's motives may have been different than met the eye. On December 14, 1906, Haskell wrote to Helen:

"I think that at some previous letter I may have told you I was the owner of all the oil and mineral rights in the 18,000 acres of the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy in Ventura Co., which George G. Briggs purchased from the More Bros. and that I purchased from George Briggs the oil and mineral rights thereon.

"I only own now a quarter interest in the property. At the time it came to my notice B. G. (4) wheedled me into giving him a half interest in order to help dispose of it.

"Later, at his solicitation, we deeded 49% to Morrow and Hellmann to assist in floating it. It is not floated yet. But perhaps there may be something doing sometime during the winter. I think that B. G. got rid of his interest in the property while I was sick in the hospital for two or three months. He denies that he has sold his stock but only borrowed upon it. But the person who has the stock says that he bought it, so there you are.

"Hereinafter, when I have more leisure and am less tired than today, I may make some suggestions about how you might be justified in making use of some of the money that may, in the future, come to you from the development of the oil property. But they will be simply suggestions, nothing binding. The will is absolute. It gives you the property absolutely."

Another letter from Haskell to his daughter written on April 27, 1910, throws further light on the subject:

"... Now mind you that this included the whole of my purchase from George Briggs of the oil and mineral rights in nearly 18,000 acres of land—all of which was conveyed to the corporation years ago long before Burnette's demise—and bear in mind that at the very



start I gave to Burnette one half of my interest to help me float and put upon the market the property, and recollect that poor Burnette fooled away the most of his stock in the company years ago."

The Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company was organized in 1902 for the purpose of exploiting Haskell's oil rights in the old rancho. Even London capitalists were not overlooked as this letter from Mr. Haskell to his daughter, Helen, in December, 1902, indicates:

"Our oil matter is still pending in the London Market and nothing definite as yet about a sale. I am as anxious as you or Burnette or any one else can be—but I saw no way to hurry the negotiations."

Edward Wilder Haskell died in 1910 at the age of ninety-one. For forty-six years his faith had never wavered in the oil potential of the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy. He had never profited by his purchase from Briggs in any way; his son, Burnette, apparently receiving the money at the time of the deal with Morrow and Hellmann(5). Haskell had been unsuccessful in interesting the oil companies in the development of his holdings; the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company was to fare no better for many years.

There is another side to this story, however. What of those settlers who had purchased the lands of the old rancho from Briggs and his agent, Higgins, not knowing that three years earlier Briggs had sold the oil and mineral rights to the property? These pioneers had settled on the land, developed irrigation companies, built schools and churches, and raised their families, while Edward Wilder Haskell was unsuccessfully trying to interest capital to develop his oil rights. Within a few years of the time that control of these rights passed into the hands of the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company, land values had risen to many times what they were in Mr. Haskell's day. Millions of dollars were at stake, and it is little wonder that a growing concern began to be apparent among the farmers of the Santa Clara Valley. George Farrand, a prominent lawyer of the time, wrote an opinion that stated in effect that in the event oil was discovered the titles of the farmers in the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy would be of no value whatsoever.

In 1916 this feeling was reflected in the filing of three separate law suits against the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company. Before coming to trial, however, they were consolidated into one suit with practically every land owner in the rancho being listed as a plaintiff. The case was tried without a jury, and the lawyers for both sides presented forceful and eloquent arguments. The plaintiffs were asking the Court to declare the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company "forever debarred from asserting or claiming any adverse claim whatever in and to or against said premises . . ." They endeavored to establish that Briggs did not intend to convey the mineral rights to Haskell for all time but merely to give him the right to exploit them during his



lifetime. They claimed priority rights through possession over the years that Haskell had done nothing to develop his rights. The judge in ruling for the defendant, the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company, wrote a lengthy decision which, stripped of its legal phraseology, said that the plaintiffs had presented no evidence to prove that the deed from Briggs to Haskell meant anything other than exactly what it said.

Hopes of the ranchers had run high during the suit, and the disappointment over the Court's ruling can well be imagined. But the land owners had a trump card up their sleeves. In actuality, this was a squeeze-play that had been started three years earlier. Walter Duval, prominent rancher and banker, had convinced County Assessor Barry that the holders of the oil and mineral rights should be assessed for tax purposes. Barry had argued that the rights were of no value; but when Duval pointed out that the ranchers would be willing to pay a good price to secure these rights, the assessor agreed they must have value and levied the assessment.

The process was slow, but eventually taxation proved the key whereby the titles were cleared to some two-thirds of the acreage in Haskell's original purchase and the oil rights secured by the surface owners. The transcript of the trial in 1916 indicates that the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company paid the taxes from 1913 to 1916. Soon after this, however, the company stopped paying, and the delinquencies began to accumulate. By 1924, when an agreement was signed between the company and the Oak Ridge Oil Company, the mineral rights had been sold to the State of California for unpaid taxes. The wording in the agreement makes clear that there was considerable doubt in the minds of the directors of the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company that the taxing of their rights was legal and valid. Also in this agreement, which was actually a document to change certain undesirable features in a lease signed in 1919, Oak Ridge Oil Company agreed to pay all of the back taxes and penalties if they were held to be valid in the courts. The Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company had the responsibility of testing the case in court. We have been unable to find any record indicating that such a court test was held or that the Oak Ridge Oil Company paid the taxes.

Mr. Anthony C. Hellmann, one of the founders of the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company, died shortly after this agreement was signed. There is little question that he had been instrumental in holding the organization together under trying circumstances. It is known that he paid some \$10,000 out of his own pocket to keep the company solvent.

It must be understood that the only tangible revenue that could come to an organization such as the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company was in the form of lease rentals, or royalties in the event oil was discovered. During all the period under discussion to date no oil had ever been found, and leases were few and rentals low. Much of



the time there was no money in the treasury. The payment, then, of even nominal taxes had to come from out of the pockets of the stockholders. That the treasury of the company in the early 1920's was in exceedingly poor condition is shown by the fact the city of San Buenaventura was able to buy back the oil rights on that portion of the rancho which underlaid it for the paltry sum of \$10.23. Of this amount \$7.93 represented delinquent taxes and the remainder the cost of advertising and recording.

This state of affairs led to the decision by the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company to sell the oil rights on the western two-thirds of the rancho in order to save the remaining eastern portion from becoming hopelessly lost through tax delinquencies. In 1924 they accepted the offer of the Ventura Refining Company of \$10,000 for the oil rights on the western portion of Haskell's original purchase. Almost immediately the Ventura Refining Company started selling these rights to the surface owners for \$2.00 per acre. In this manner the clouded titles of some 11,500 acres of land were cleared.

Edward Wilder Haskell had always considered the eastern portion of the rancho the most promising for oil. The Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company still agreed with this idea, and on the eastern 6,200 acres the property owners were unable to buy the oil rights. This acreage constituted some of the finest farm land in the world; it also included the entire city of Santa Paula. With the titles to the western two-thirds of the old rancho now cleared, continuing efforts were made toward removing the cloud still hanging over the remaining land. It was not until 1940, however, that Mr. R. H. Hellmann, president of the company, agreed that some adjustment should be made. He generously offered the land owners in the remaining 6,200 acres the privilege of buying back one-half the oil rights for \$10 per acre with the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company retaining the right to lease. This would clear titles for all practical purposes, and would still enable the company to reap some of the profits of Haskell's dream in the event of an oil discovery.

In retrospect it would seem that the ranchers would now be grabbing their checkbooks and stampeding to buy this portion of the long sought oil rights. True, a majority did take advantage of Mr. Hellmann's very fair offer, but there were some who felt that the company would not offer to sell if they thought there was any chance of striking oil. There were others who simply did not have the money to buy, nor the collateral with which to borrow. The result today is that some land owners have one-half their oil rights while the next door neighbors may have none.

Soon after this deal was made, the Shell Oil Company leased 3,000 acres of the property and commenced drilling operations in 1941. Naturally, with a good gamble for oil now in prospect the \$10 per acre offer was withdrawn on this Shell lease. And just as naturally,



the land owners who had felt there could be no oil or that the deal was not quite on the square, now started clamoring to secure their oil rights. The Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company again agreed to sell, but the price was raised to \$20 per acre, a nominal enough sum if the changed circumstances are considered. A few more owners took advantage of this new offer and purchased one-half of the oil rights to their lands.

It is interesting to conjecture what might have happened to this first Shell well if the Japanese had not attacked Pearl Harbor. Certainly with today's knowledge of the area a producing well could be brought in from the same location. With the outbreak of war and an almost immediate scarcity of steel, the well was abandoned after drilling to slightly less than 6,000 feet and the lease quit-claimed.

Soon after the end of the war, a mushrooming population brought to the forefront the old title cloud still hanging over property owners in Santa Paula. The City Attorney of Santa Paula, Blaine Romney, expressed the problem to the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company in a letter of May 2, 1950: "... lending institutions have been extremely reluctant of recent years to finance building in the City as long as the mineral rights are separated from the surface rights." This difficulty was not confined to private lending agencies but extended to the Federal National Mortgage Association, a federal corporation. The entire matter was taken up with Mr. R. H. Hellmann, President of Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company, by the Santa Paula-Fillmore Realty Board through Fred Udall, president of the board. Space does not permit extended discussion of this interesting subject. Suffice to say that within two months Mr. Udall and Mr. Hellmann, together with officials of Title Insurance and Trust Company, had worked out an agreement acceptable to all parties concerned. The spirit of cooperation that marked the negotiations is best expressed by Mr. Hellmann in a letter to Udall on July 17, 1950:

"I am very glad the matter has worked out satisfactorily to you and the members of your board, and I assure you that we are always ready to help in any way possible to eliminate any difficulties which may arise in this connection."

In 1947 the western portion of the remaining 6200 acres held by the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company was leased to the Superior Oil Company. Superior assigned an interest in a portion of this acreage to General Petroleum Corporation in the early 1950's, and G. P. drilled one well, SPS No. 1, a dry hole. In 1954 Shell Oil Company acquired an interest in this same acreage and in November, 1954 commenced drilling operations on SPS No. 2, the well that proved to be the discovery well on the Rancho Santa Paula y Saticoy. Oil started flowing into the tanks in the late spring of 1955. Ninety-one years after Edward Wilder Haskell pleaded with his brother-in-law, George G. Briggs, not to sell, Haskell's faith was vindicated.



At the present time there are over thirty wells producing on the acreage that was part of Haskell's original purchase. Since the science of geology as it applies to petroleum is rather a science of hindsight, no man can predict what the ultimate development will be.

In October of 1956 land owners who had purchased their one-half oil rights from the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company were advised in a letter signed by President Hellmann: "... we have transferred substantially all of our assets to the General Petroleum Corporation, effective July 1, 1956. . . . It is with regret that we turn over our joint ownership in your land to others; however, we feel that the same pleasant business relationship which has always existed between our company and you will be continued by General Petroleum." Thus passed out of existence the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company, one of the most controversial and least understood facets in all Ventura County history.

#### NOTES

1. Haskell Peak in Sierra County is named for Edward Wilder Haskell.
2. Helen Haskell was married in 1892 to the eminent artist, S. Seymour Thomas. Mr. Thomas is regarded by many as the foremost portrait painter of his time.
3. 17,000 acres is intended. The actual acreage in the Santa Paula y Saticoy Rancho was 17,773.33.
4. Burnette G. Haskell.
5. At the time of his death in 1910, Haskell held only 1/7 of the stock in the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company, and this stock remained in the hands of Haskell's heirs until the merger with General Petroleum Corp.

#### Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due Mrs. Jean Haskell, granddaughter of Edward Wilder Haskell, for making available the letters and papers of her grandfather; Mr. R. H. Hellmann, President of the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company at the time of the merger with General Petroleum Corporation, for his loan of correspondence relating to the clearing of titles for loan purposes in Santa Paula; the staff of the County Recorder's office and the staff of the County Clerk's office, for their assistance in locating early records of the Santa Paula y Saticoy Oil Company.

# The History of the Peoples Lumber Company

By JOHN CRUMP

The early history of the lumber industry in Ventura and Ventura County dates back a few years prior to the year 1871. There was no railroad or pier to serve with transportation, and boats would anchor as close to shore as possible and transfer lumber onto a raft about 8 by 20 feet. This raft was drawn by horses winding a rope or cable around a large drum to get the lumber ashore.

In 1871 a wharf was built in Hueneme and the firm of Bard and Salsbury received shipments of lumber for their firm over this pier. Two years later Mr. Juan Camarillo financed the building of a wharf at Ventura. The first lumber boat to discharge its cargo was named *Kalorama*. The firm receiving the first cargo was Daly & Rodgers (Mr. Daly being the father of the Daly Bros. who were in the clothing business in Ventura for many years). Daly & Rodgers soon purchased a lumber boat of their own named the *San Buenaventura* and used it for many years to convey lumber from the northern mills.

In 1890 many prominent business men and farmers throughout the county conceived the idea of forming a cooperative lumber company of their own. A meeting was called to be held in Ventura on September 13 of that year, and from this meeting the Peoples Lumber Company was born.

The original capital of this company was \$20,000 with 200 shares of stock of \$100 par value being issued. The issue was readily subscribed by 135 citizens, each stockholder being limited to the purchase of not more than two shares. On October 2, 1890, the new concern was incorporated and the Peoples Lumber Company has been in truth and in fact a stock company ever since. Today it has 356 shareholders, 235 of whom are Ventura County citizens. The present authorized capital is \$3,000,000 with \$1,350,000 being issued.

C. D. Bonestel, who was the main factor in organizing the company, became its first president and general manager. He ran the business the first two years, then turned the active management over to his son, W. A. Bonestel, who ran the business until 1904. The elder Bonestel continued as president of the company until 1903. Presidents of the concern who followed Mr. Bonestel were: C. H. McKeveit, 1903-05; D. T. Perkins, 1905-19; J. M. Sharp, 1919-31; L. W. Corbett, 1931-40; Adolfo Camarillo, 1940-56 and A. J. Dingeman, who is now president of the company.

Gradually the Peoples Lumber Company enlarged its string of yards to eight, those besides Ventura being located at Oxnard, Santa Paula, Fillmore, Ojai, Moorpark, Camarillo and Santa Susana. Its





Peoples Lumber Company, 1897. Left to Right: Roy Sheldon,  
W. A. Bonestel, C. E. Healy and C. E. Bonestel

slogan became "Eight yards to serve Ventura County." From the start until today these eight yards follow the policy of doing business only in this county. These eight yards, covering from one to five acres each, are still "one stop" building service stations, handling and stocking everything for the builder from foundation to finish hardware. Each yard has a small service mill department, and in the central yard at Ventura they have a large and modern planing mill and cabinet work shop which serves all the company yards.

The history of this company is one of steady growth, steadfastness of purpose, high business principles and continual helpfulness to the county it serves. There is written into the history of the company many remarkable stories, of which the following is typical. In 1892 the Ojai-Ventura railroad was being built, and it ran out of cash. It appears that it needed a few hundred dollars, and the railroad asked the lumber company for the loan of that amount. The loan was granted, and it was written into the minutes that if the stockholders failed to approve the loan, the directors promised to personally pay the amount. No one objected, and the railroad was finished.

This is the 67 years story of the Peoples Lumber Company. It has been in business for 67 years at one place, under the same original name, under the same ownership, and using the same corporate seal, which is a record approached by very few lumber concerns in California.



# Hueneme As a Grain Port

1870-1900

By MADELINE MIEDEMA

During the thirty years from 1870 to 1900 Hueneme had the reputation of being the greatest grain port south of San Francisco. Its warehouses were the largest and its volume of trade the highest on the south coast. The coming of the grain ships to carry away the sacks of barley, wheat, corn which long lines of wagons had brought in from Las Posas, Simi, Conejo, is one of the interesting aspects of California history. "Five or six steam and sailing vessels could be seen at one time in the Channel Sunday," says the *Ventura Weekly Free Press* of March 22, 1884. This is but a brief indication of the size of the grain trade.

The building of the Hueneme wharf in 1871 was the beginning of the importance of Hueneme as a port, although some shipping had already been carried on by the squatters on the Rancho La Colonia. This ranch, The Rancho Del Rio de Santa Clara o La Colonia, had been purchased by Thomas A. Scott, Assistant Secretary of War under Lincoln, when he was interested in building an Atlantic and Pacific Railroad to California and in developing the oil deposits around Sulphur Mountain on the upper Santa Paula Canyon. Scott also bought the Ojai grant, Simi, Las Posas, San Francisco, Calleguas, Canyada Larga as well as La Colonia—about 277,000 acres of Ventura County. Thomas R. Bard was sent out by Scott as administrator of these large holdings in 1865. He was to develop the oil, farm the great ranches, and ultimately subdivide them. It was soon discovered that the oil was too heavy a grade to be commercially profitable. "These big ranches," writes Beryl Bard, daughter of Thomas R. Bard, "were then developed for cattle and sheep. It was this change that made my father move to Hueneme because of the possibility of shipping there."

Mr. Bard found squatters already in possession of the point of land called Hueneme. The proper boundaries of the Rancho La Colonia had not yet been set. On June 15, 1870, Secretary Cox ruled that the land around Hueneme was public land. By 1870 about 100 squatters had settled on the "public land" and had organized a Squatters' League, in which W. E. Barnard and J. F. Willson were prominent. A townsite had been laid out by W. E. Barnard, H. P. Flint, and G. S. Gilbert, who also started a store. In 1870 a Hueneme Lighter Company was formed by W. E. Barnard, Charles H. Bailey, Christopher Christensen, and Daniel Dempsey. Arrangements were made to have the steamer *Kalorama* of Goodall and Nelson Steamship Company, San Francisco, make regular visits. Her first stop was on June 20, 1870, when she brought a cargo of lumber that was tossed overboard to float to shore and took away fifty tons of grain. Sixty thou-



sand sacks of grain, loaded by means of lighters, were shipped during the first year. Lightering through the surf must have been difficult. Some valuable oil machinery was lost in the process of disembarking. The first lighter company had two large lighters, one fishing boat, a house or frame building. On November 22, 1873, Thomas R. Bard bought a one-quarter interest in "Wynema Lighter Company" for \$350 from W. A. Barnard.

Thomas R. Bard, however, as administrator of the property of Thomas A. Scott, brought suit in District Court to dispossess Barnard and the other squatters, but the case failed. It was not until 1872 that a decision favorable to Scott was made by Secretary Delano. Meanwhile, Bard went ahead with plans for the wharf. On February 15, 1871, he organized the Hueneme Wharf and Lighter Company with \$15,000 capital stock, sold in 100 shares of \$50 each. Ninety-nine shares were under the name of T. R. Bard, one-half a share under R. G. Surdam, and one-half under C. L. Bard. The minutes of the Hueneme Wharf and Lighter Company state, "The object of which this Company is formed is for the construction of a wharf at or near the present shipping port of Hueneme, in the County of Santa Barbara. . . ." Mr. Bard wrote, "The stock (of the Hueneme Wharf and Lighter Company) was originally held by me, my brother and R. G. Surdam in our names, but in fact, in trust for Thomas A. Scott. It had been treated as an adjunct to Mr. Scott's landed interests. . . ."

In April of 1871 Thomas A. Scott gave permission to go ahead with the wharf. A Western Union telegram of Thomas A. Scott to T. R. Bard of April 8, 1871, says, "Answer about wharf Monday." Another on April 10, 1871, says, "Go ahead but work as economically and draw as lightly as possible." The company proceeded on May 2, 1871, to apply for a franchise from the County of Santa Barbara (Ventura County had not yet been formed) to build a wharf. This franchise was granted on August 16, 1871, but Bard had already gone ahead with the building of the wharf.

The actual building of the wharf brought Bard in open conflict with the squatters. On the night of May 30, 1871, Bard had the lumber and the men to build the wharf brought to the scene of the proposed wharf. They erected a fence around the wharf property and were ready at 5:00 A.M. on May 31 with four rifles and several pistols. During the morning a party of squatters led by W. E. Barnard arrived; the latter urged the settlers to maintain their rights. Bard said his party would shoot if the squatters advanced. Barnard pushed over some of the fence, but he didn't attack the men. The crowd finally dispersed. Later each side gave bonds for a title when ownership should be established legally. By August 1871 the wharf was finished and the company was ready to start on the warehouse.

The first wharf was 900 feet long and extended to a point where the water was 18 feet deep. It was 40 feet wide at the outer end. Six



to eight thousand sacks a day could be handled. In subsequent years the wharf was extended until it was 1426 feet long; there was 22 feet of water at low tide, 28 feet at high tide. Nine thousand sacks a day could be loaded. It was well built, as attested by the following items from the *Ventura Weekly Free Press*. In October 1877 the Ventura wharf had gone down with heavy seas. "The wharf at Hueneme is at least as much exposed as this one and yet the seas pass over and under and all around it, leaving it ready for business the next day." In January 1878 the Ventura wharf was again destroyed by high waves. "The wharf at Hueneme is the only one between San Francisco and Santa Monica which stood the storm unless it be the small one at Gaviota. . . This is creditable to the skill of the builders, Messrs. Salisbury and Frazier, who also built the staunch wharf at Santa Monica."

A tramway connected the wharf to the warehouses on shore. Eventually 27 platform cars handled freight. Corrals were built to care for cattle and sheep to be shipped. By 1883 there were four storehouses with a capacity of 684,120 cubic feet, which would hold 300,000 sacks. There were office buildings, a residence for the wharfinger, an artesian well to supply water to ships. An inventory of 1885 reveals 14 trucks, 6 scoops, 1 donkey engine, 1 set of scales, 2 wagons, 3 mules, 2 pile drivers, 1 boat, anchors and chains.

The wharf was a free wharf. The various shippers, farmers or commission merchants chartered the ships they wished to carry their products. Thomas R. Bard wrote to Goodall, Perkins & Company in March 1898, "It is not in our power to direct the movement of the grain for the shipper charters the vessels, and directs us to load his grain upon them; and we never solicit lading for these vessels nor do we engage any of them for our patrons. From the very beginning till now, our wharf has been a 'free' wharf. . ." Some idea of the chartering of vessels can be obtained from an article in the *Hueneme Herald* on the "grain fleet" for 1897. It lists some chartered ships; the *Alcatraz* for Wolff & Lehmann; *Protection* for Gilger and Waterman; *Newsboy*, *Westport*, *Vesta*, *Watson* (four-masted), *Santa Rosa* and the *Serena Thayer* for A. Levy; the *Scotia* and the *Challenger* for F. W. Gerberding.

The stockholders of the Hueneme Wharf and Lighter Company (later the Hueneme Wharf Company) obtained their income from activities as warehousemen and wharfingers. To give an example of the services of the company and the earnings for one year, I quote a note on the earnings for the year ending July 31, 1898: storage, \$23,037.62; wharfage, \$23,349.32; dockage, \$1,893.00; hoisting, \$591.49; sales of materials, \$189.61; water, \$26.00; scales, \$94.70; bean cleaning, \$917.95; total, \$50,093.69.

The storage rates, for example, on all sacked products such as beans, wool, barley, wheat, corn and others were 50c per ton for the





Hueneme Harbor, 1895

first month, 25c for the second, 25c for the third, or \$1.00 for the season. Wharfage rates were set by the County Board of Supervisors. The average net profit for the Wharf Company was \$10,806.13 per year; the average dividend,  $7\frac{1}{2}\%$  per year on \$50,000.

As noted above, the Hueneme Wharf and Lighter Company was incorporated on February 15, 1871. On December 18, 1880, the stockholders increased the capital stock to \$50,000 (100 shares at \$500 each). On May 16, 1882, Thomas R. Bard became the owner of the wharf by buying the property from the heirs of Thomas A. Scott for \$50,000. In September 1885 the property and franchise of the Hueneme Wharf and Lighter Company was turned over to the Hueneme Wharf Company and the former company was dissolved. Mr. Bard was president of the Wharf and Lighter Company and later of the Hueneme Wharf Company. Associated with him at various times were John P. Green, A. J. Salisbury, and D. T. Perkins.

From the time the company was founded in 1871 until it was finally dissolved in 1906, attempts were made to lease or sell the property, but nothing ever came of any of the attempts. In 1871 Thomas R. Bard wrote to Goodall & Nelson Steamship Company, "It has occurred to me that an advantageous arrangement to both parties might be made by leasing the whole property to you for one, two, or three years." In 1883 the Pacific Coast Steamship Company was offered the property for \$125,000, but turned it down. In 1887 there was talk



of selling to the railroad company. In 1889 a 4/5 interest was offered to the heirs of the Scott estate for \$100,000. In 1901 a sale was considered to the Southern Mill and Warehouse Company, adjunct of the Southern Pacific, for \$80,000. The properties were finally sold on July 6, 1906, to George E. Hart and Emil Firth of Los Angeles for \$40,000.

The steamship company which sent two steamers a week to Hueneme for many years on a regular schedule and which advertised in the newspapers until 1906 was the Pacific Coast Steamship Company. The company had gone through several changes of ownership. Letterheads in the files of the Berylwood Investment Company reveal the names of Goodall & Nelson in 1871; Goodall, Nelson & Perkins in 1872; Goodall, Nelson & Perkins Steamship Company in 1876; and the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, Goodall, Perkins & Company, General agents, in 1879. The Pacific Coast Steamship Company was practically owned by the Oregon Improvement Company.

From the Hueneme *Herald* it will be noted that the steamers stopped at Hueneme on the way down but not on the way north. Passengers who wished to go to San Francisco had to catch the steamers in Ventura or Santa Barbara. As Los Angeles developed, there grew up some agitation to have the steamers deliver goods on the way north. The Hueneme *Herald* said, "Some Los Angeles merchants are making an effort to have the steamers of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company stop here on the way north. At present these steamers stop in here regularly going south but do not call on the up trip unless some considerable freight is offered. For some years Los Angeles wholesalers have been gradually extending their trade over Southern California and will no doubt succeed in their efforts relating to this section. . . ." So far as I know, the stop on the north-bound route was never arranged.

But many ships besides those of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company put into the port of Hueneme. There were still a great many two-masted sailing schooners, or windjammers, in the trade. A hybrid ship had been developed in the '70's and '80's with the conversion of schooners into steamers by the installation of a steam engine. The new ship was called a steam schooner. To quote McNairn and MacMullen, "There was little change in the outward appearance of the converted sailing steam schooner. An unorthodox, box-like cabin was built on the afterdeck, and a slim stack rose from this cabin structure just forward of the main mast. But sail was retained, in modified form, and continued to be so for thirty years after the first conversion." The ships built as steam schooners were somewhat different—they were longer, they had a somewhat different superstructure containing cabins for officers and passengers, their after section resembled "a steamer while the forward end retained the schooner appearance." Both schooners and steam schooners had wooden hulls. The steamers were coal burners; oil came later.



The sailing schooners would carry cargoes for from 20c to \$1.00 less per ton than the steam schooners. Hence, there developed a rate war which brought the freight charges of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company down from \$3.50 per ton to eventually \$1.25. Quite a correspondence went on between the Hueneme Wharf Company and Goodall, Perkins & Company about this matter. The steamship company felt it was being discriminated against. Some excerpts from these letters are interesting. The company wrote Thomas R. Bard in 1876, "We have not been very successful in our efforts in getting a fair proportion of the freight shipped from your wharf for our vessels. . . We cannot remain idle and permit all of the business of so important a port to be diverted to others. . . "Bard replied, "Referring to yours of February 17 . . . relative to arrangements for giving your vessels the bulk of the carrying trade from Hueneme. I desire to say that though disposed to accept the proposition made by you, I prefer for the present to be free from any alliances which might interfere with any effort that might be required on our part to prevent the building of a competing wharf by the Grangers." A. Gerberding probably gives the real reasons for the farmers' preference for sailing vessels. He wrote, "The farmers here receive such low prices for their product this year that they are inclined to economize in every way, and especially on freights, consequently there has been a very general ordering of shipments per sail tonnage."

In 1880 the question again came up. The steamship company wrote to Mr. Bard, "We feel confident that you can appreciate our feelings when for years steamer after steamer arrives from below almost empty, while there are thousands of tons of freight awaiting shipment at your landing, and schooners are constantly arriving from there with full loads at rates just sufficiently below ours to secure it . . . Reducing our rate simply reduces the schooner rate without giving us any additional business." Mr. Bard replied, "The owners of the wharf being largely interested in lands in this vicinity regard their wharf property as an improvement necessary to the development of their lands and while we concede that their general interests would be promoted by having your steamers come here regularly . . . we understand that our interests are so closely related to those of the community that it would be impolitic for us to allow the carrying trade to be monopolized by any carrier. The largest shippers from here are Wolff & Levy, who are accustomed to charter their schooners at San Francisco, and Einstein & Bernheim, who are generally supplied with schooners by Mr. Stovell, your own agent . . . Quite often farmers ship on their own account and it is customary to employ Mr. Stovell as a broker to secure charters for their grain." Again in 1883 Mr. Bard wrote, "We think also that you will have realized that it is not because of any personal antagonism on our part or on the part of the people of the vicinity that your steamers are not satisfactorily patronized at Hueneme, but that it is solely because of our geographical position that sailing

vessels do the principal part of the carrying trade from Hueneme . . . for as long as schooners shall continue to carry lumber to Wilmington Harbor so long will it be reasonable to expect them to seek for return cargoes of grain to San Francisco at low rates of freight, especially at Hueneme, the nearest shipping place north of Wilmington, and thus avoid expenses for water and ballast." In 1894 the question once more came up, and Mr. Bard wrote, "It is true that the vessels you call 'tramps', referring to steam schooners and sailing vessels, are doing the greater part of our carrying trade between Hueneme and San Francisco. This has been the case for several years, and is due entirely to the rates at which the service is performed, being much lower than you can afford . . ."

We should probably mention here one vessel especially connected with Hueneme. It was the three-masted schooner *Hueneme*, built to carry lumber from Puget Sound to Hueneme and grain from Hueneme north. A description appeared in the Ventura paper on her initial voyage, "The fine new three-masted schooner *Hueneme*, owned by Messrs. Bard, Walton, Preble and Sudden, arrived at this port early on Sunday morning, under the command of Captain George Elliott, the well-known commander of many coastal steamers. This schooner is a beautiful craft, and was built for the owners by Hall Brothers at Port Ludlow. She is 354 tons burden, and brought 454,000 feet of pine lumber, 280,000 feet of which is for Saxby, Walton & Preble, and the remainder for A. J. Salisbury & Co., Hueneme. The schooner is 144 feet in length over all, with a beam of 34 feet and 10 1/3 feet depth of hold. Her masts are each 96 feet in length, with topmasts of 50 feet. Her canvas consists of a standing and two flying jibs, foresail, mainsail, spanker, gaff topsail, and main and mizzen topmast staysails. She is beautifully finished throughout, and no expense has been spared in furnishing the necessary hawsers, ground tackle, etc., to enable her to be handled in the coasting business."

(Continued)



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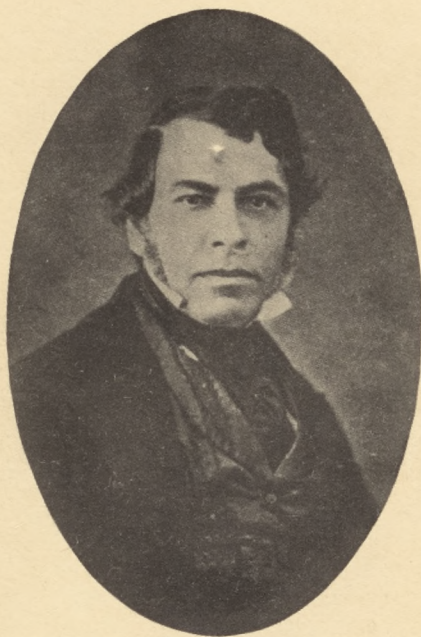
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*QUARTERLY*



Ygnacio del Valle

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## Rancho Camulos

There is no spot in Ventura County, with the exception of the Mission San Buenaventura, that has the historic interest and glamour that the Rancho Camulos possesses. It is regrettable in some respects that no small part of this appeal was generated by the pen of Helen Hunt Jackson when she wrote her famous novel, *Ramona*. We have no quarrel with this classic of California literature as such. The unfortunate aspect is the fact that the purely fictional characters in the story have tended to overshadow the far more interesting persons around which the history of Camulos revolves, the members of the del Valle family. A scholar studying the subject for the first time might well reach the erroneous conclusion that the Camulos Rancho and *Ramona* were somehow synonymous, whereas the del Valles were just some ordinary squatter family living there.

The transition from Mexican to American rule, plus the drought of 1863-64, was the nemesis of the majority of the early Californian families. The del Valles weathered these storms, although they lost the greater part of their holdings in the process. The salvaged portion, Camulos, was destined to remain under their jurisdiction until well into the present century. Of greater significance was the adaptability of the family to American ways and the positions of public trust attained by some of its members.

*Ramona* and Alessandro have their niche in fiction's Hall of Fame, but the story of Camulos must ever remain the story of the family that lived its history, the del Valles.

# The Camulos Story

BY WALLY SMITH

The story of Rancho Camulos is not so much the story of the land as it is the story of the Californians who developed and eventually lost it — one of Ventura County's first families, the del Valles. It is the story, also, of the transition from the leisurely *manana* civilization of the first settlers to the hustle and bustle of the *Americano* life.

Antonio Seferino del Valle first swept this narrow neck of the *Santa Clara del Sur* with his gaze on a warm summer day 133 years ago, in June of 1824. The young Mexican army lieutenant was weary from his long and dusty trip southward from San Miguel to the *tulares* at the southern end of the San Joaquin Valley, where he, Father Vincente de Sarria and four dozen nondescript soldiers from the presidio at Monterey had joined forces with Captain Pablo de la Portilla to round up renegade Mission Indians. In February the Indians at Mission Santa Ynez had revolted — a revolt which spread quickly to the missions at La Purisima, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, San Buenaventura and San Fernando.

Government troops put down the uprising. But Indian rebels from Santa Barbara, San Buenaventura and San Fernando took refuge in the swampy *tulares* and Antonio was at the head of a contingent of Spanish troops dispatched to round them up and march them to the nearest presidio. The return trip to Santa Barbara was made by way of the Santa Clara River to Mission San Buenaventura, thence northward along the *Rincon* to the presidio, which was reached on the 21st of June. The revolt was over.

Later events showed that the young Mexican lieutenant (he was 36) was not unmindful of the beauties he had encountered on this dusty march to the sea, through head-high mustard and fertile cattle land belonging to the missions San Fernando and San Buenaventura. Like most Mexican Army officers assigned to duty in the northern province, he had learned to love Alta California and long for the time when he could retire from distasteful military life and devote himself to raising a family and a spread of cattle on one of the Thousand Hills so eloquently memorialized by the late Robert Glass Cleland.

Antonio had come north aboard the *San Carlos* in 1819 to help guard against the depredations of Hippolyte de Bouchard, a renegade Frenchman in the pay of the Mexican insurgents who had already quit the coast and departed for parts unknown. Antonio had no wish to return to Old Mexico, where his wife, dead in childbirth, lay buried and his son and daughter, Ygnacio and Maria, were in the hands of relatives.



Antonio's dream came true 15 years later.

The intervening years brought Ygnacio northward as a young army recruit, first to Monterey and then to Santa Barbara. Antonio, a hothead, had been convicted of insubordination by court martial at Monterey and upon his release in 1825 he wrote to Ygnacio to join him. Two years later Antonio's troops became so unruly (most were convicted murderers, thieves and just plain no-goods exiled to living with the northern troops) that the residents of Monterey, the capital, rose up in wrath and had them banished to the little military outpost of San Blas in Baja California. The banishment was never carried out but the breach between Antonio's troops and the civilian population was never healed.

In 1832 father and son fought on opposite sides; Ygnacio with General Jose Maria Echeandia, a San Diego insurgent and former governor who wrested Los Angeles from the incumbent authorities, and Antonio with the ill-fated loyalists under Governor Manuel Victoria. Fed by the bitterness of this revolution, the differences between Antonio and Ygnacio widened and deathbed attempts at a reconciliation failed.

It was in 1838 that Antonio applied to Governor Juan Bautista Alvarado for a grant of 22 leagues of the land which had been under his jurisdiction as administrator of Mission San Fernando during the turbulent years of secularization. On January 22, 1839, Alvarado signed an order granting to Antonio and his heirs, for past services rendered to the civil government, a tract of land 22 miles long and 10 miles wide — 48,611 acres in all (Rancho San Francisquito, or Little San Francisco) and including the lovely spot on the banks of the Santa Clara known to the Indians as Camulos.

The Spanish word *Camulos* meant Juniper Tree. But the del Valles have preferred the Chumash meaning — House of Refuge — and the Camulos adobes have been just that for three generations.

Antonio and his San Fernando majordomo, Pedro Lopez, went on horseback to Rancho San Pedro and then to Mission Santa Ynez and returned with 1,000 cattle and 400 horses to stock the new ranch, using a corral built by the padres near the eastern limit of the grant. An 1804 adobe 107 feet long and 23 feet wide, with a tiled roof, stood on the slope southwest of what is now Tip's restaurant, on the south bank of the river, and it was into this that Antonio and his wife Jacoba Feliz moved before the year was out. Its four rooms had been used as an overseer's quarters and a granary. Part of its foundations and tiled floor were still to be seen not many years ago when the site was excavated by a Santa Barbara archaeologist.

Of Antonio's seven children only four moved into the adobe. Maria, his firstborn, remained in Mexico. Ygnacio, on the outs with his father, remained in Santa Barbara. There he was living not in the del Valle adobe, but with Anastasio Carrillo, and carrying on an affair with a lovely young daughter of the family. Six-year-old



Solaria, born out of wedlock to Antonio and Policarpia Lopez at the presidio, remained with her mother. Moving to the ranch were Jose Antonio, 4; Victor 2; Ygnacio de Gracia, 1; and Magdalena, then just a few months old. Another son, Jose Ygnacio, was born shortly after they moved into the adobe(1).

It was a peaceful scene they surveyed from their front door — but a deceptive one. Indians were carrying out their depredations against Antonio's livestock even before he moved his family to the ranch, venting their wrath against Governor Alvarado for giving away what they considered Mission Indian lands. Antonio wrote bitterly to Alvarado accusing Father Ybarra, whom he had succeeded as administrator at Mission San Fernando, of stirring up the Indians against him; and the governor was forced to send troops. In later years Antonio's failure to observe the niceties prescribed by civil law, when he assumed control of the grant, and his failure to file a proper map prepared by Pablo de la Guerra, were to cause a great deal of trouble for Ygnacio. And within five months Pedro Carrillo, manager of Rancho Sespe and the son of the owner, Carlos Carrillo, lay claim to that part of Rancho San Francisquito known as Camulos.

From his deathbed, scarcely two years after the ranch was established, Antonio sent his physician, Dr. Nicholas Den, to Ygnacio with a flag of truce. Unmarried, Ygnacio was at the time enamored of three Santa Barbara señoritas — Maria del Carmen Rodriquez, Manuelita Ortega and Maria de los Angeles Carrillo. If Ygnacio would marry any of these and settle down, his father vowed, he could have 300 head of cattle, a half interest in the del Valle adobe in Santa Barbara, and "the place extending from the *portesuelo* of San Francisco towards the west" — Camulos.

Ygnacio, at 32, was ready to settle down. His choice was an easy one since he was living at the Carrillo adobe and Maria had just borne him a son, Juventino. Ygnacio and Maria exchanged their wedding vows before Bishop Narciso Duran the following New Year's Day.

An eighth child, Maria Concepcion, was born to Antonio and Jacoba four months after Antonio died a wrinkled and infirm old man at 53, leaving no will. The probate court in Los Angeles named Jacoba and her six surviving children as his heirs. Antonio left 16 bulls, 420 cows, 318 heifers, 576 calves, 1,008 sheep, 126 lambs, 128 mares, 86 horses and 70 colts. He also left 48,813 acres of rich cattle and agricultural land, virtually all undeveloped. Jacoba received 21,307 acres and Ygnacio, as eldest son, received 13,599. Other children received 4,648 acres apiece. On the third of June Father Blas Ordaz conducted last rites at Camulos, and Antonio was laid to rest at San Fernando Mission.

His widow, Jacoba, soon married an overseer on the ranch, Jose Salazar, who moved into the Castaic adobe. When the Jayhawkers straggled weary and half-starved out of the hills in February, 1850, it





Camulos Chapel and Fountain

was Jacoba and Jose who befriended them and sent them on their way with food and fresh horses.

Antonio was fortunate, perhaps, in leaving his beloved ranch before it was found to harbor gold—the commodity being discovered a full six years before Marshall's momentous find in Sutter's mill race at Coloma. The strike was made by Juan Francisco (Chico) Lopez, Antonio's ranch foreman and brother of Antonio's foreman at Mission San Fernando, and a companion, Charles Baric, a native of Bordeaux. Lopez immediately applied for a grant but was told the land was privately owned (the discovery was made approximately three miles south of the adobe at Castaic) so he prospected the surrounding canyons and discovered gold near Piru Creek, in what is now San Feliciano Canyon (2). This land, Rancho Temescal, was granted to Lopez but eventually passed into the hands of del Valles. Later it was purchased by an Elgin,



Illinois, publisher of religious materials named David C. Cook, who established his ill-fated Garden of Eden in Piru Canyon.

Ygnacio was named administrator of the affairs of the miners who flocked to San Feliciano following Lopez' discovery (3). But neither he nor any of the del Valles directly participated in the mining activities; and in 1848, with Marshall's strike, the mines were deserted for the more lucrative gold fields of the north.

When Antonio moved into the adobe on the south bank of the river, he had planned to convert another smaller adobe farther west on the north bank into a home for Ygnacio. Bad blood between father and son intervened. But it is that adobe (now 28 rooms) which is today occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Burger—a TV aerial its only incongruous note. The walls are four feet thick. The main section is 200 feet long and the two wings are 125 feet each. The inside porches have been screened because of rattlesnakes. The old storehouse has been turned into a garage, a grudging concession to the machine age. The old kitchen and dining room have been converted into bedrooms, and new ones added. An old four-poster bed was removed and the bedroom turned into an attractive library, highlighted by a magnificent copper hood over its fireplace.

It's a far cry from the four-room adobe into which Ygnacio Ramon de Jesus del Valle moved with his second wife, Ysabel Varela of Los Angeles (his first wife died in childbirth in 1847) toward the latter part of 1861. With them were three children—Reginaldo, Ygnacio Jose and Josefa—and eight adopted orphans. In later years Reginaldo, who died in 1938 after a distinguished career as a state senator and Chairman of the Board of Water and Power for the city of Los Angeles, vividly recalled the day he piled into the beautiful del Valle carriage at the plaza for the long trip to Camulos.

Ygnacio found the adobe surrounded by the huts of the Alliklik Indians. These he repaired and enlarged. The grateful Indians reciprocated by launching a face-lifting project for the adobe, hauling in the needed material from Los Angeles on crude *carretas* drawn by oxen, taking seven days for each round trip. When it was finished, the adobe boasted 20 rooms. The windows were protected with perpendicular bars against wild animals and an occasional hostile Indian.

In the walls, according to the custom of the time, was buried an Indian child. The tiny body was later reburied in the little graveyard still to be seen east of the adobe. Many del Valles were at first buried there, but with the sale of the ranch they were taken up and reburied at Calvary Cemetery in Los Angeles.

In its heyday Camulos was famed for its wines and brandies. The huge brick winery west of the adobe still stands, now housing a family museum in its upstairs rooms.

One corner of the garden Ysabel devoted to a quaint white chapel, later immortalized by Helen Hunt Jackson in her best-selling book, *Ramona*, although the author spent but one brief afternoon at



the ranch in the absence of the Senora (4). Furnished with vestments a century and a half old, used at Mass by Franciscan fathers and given into the safekeeping of Dona Ysabel by Bishop Mora because of her lifetime devotion to the Roman Catholic Church, the little chapel still stands. Floodwaters from the St. Francis Dam break cut through the gardens and missed the chapel by only a few feet in March, 1928.

As a special favor, the church granted Camulos a monthly visit by a priest from one of the nearby missions, who administered the sacraments to Dona Ysabel and members of her vast household. Just as she had donated a lamp to the little plaza church in Los Angeles in remembrance of her loved ones, now Dona Ysabel installed a lamp at Camulos and vowed it would always be kept burning.

This was for Joseph Lancaster Brent, a close friend of the family who had come from Baltimore to Los Angeles in 1850 and opened a law office in the del Valle adobe on the plaza. Now he had volunteered for Civil War service with the Confederate troops, and his absence was felt keenly by Ygnacio and Ysabel.

"She wrote me after the war," Brent later recorded in his memoirs, "that when I left she had lighted a little lamp in her oratory and vowed that it should burn as long as I lived."

Dona Ysabel mothered many an orphan child, inquiring neither into its background nor its family ties. It was enough for her that the child was without father and mother. It was this generous trait which welcomed Blanca Yndart and Guadalupe Ridley into her household and gave Mrs. Jackson the inspiration for her fictional character "Ramona". For Ramona was an easily recognizable composite of these two Camulos wards, one the daughter of Ulpiano and Feliciana Yndart of Santa Barbara, and the other of Colonel Alonzo Ridley, a regimental commander in the Confederacy.

Blanca came to live at Camulos while her mother lay dying in a Los Angeles hospital. On December 10, 1865, Ulpiano wrote to Ygnacio: "*Mi querido compadre*—Yesterday between 12 and 1 o'clock your *comadre* Feliciana delivered her soul to her Creator. I am so grieved at such an unexpected loss and I suffer more as each day passes. How her daughter will miss her! Give to Blanca my comfort. Extend the same to my *comadre*."

Blanca's grandfather was Domingo Yndart, a sea captain who followed the winds to the Orient. It was she who inherited the jewels which Ramona received in the book, on her 21st birthday. In later years, stout, square jawed, Blanca survived her husband, James Maguire, and lived at Camulos.

Nor did Guadalupe physically resemble Ramona. She was stout, with her long straight black hair parted in the middle and rolled into a huge bun on top of her head. She had plain features, dark skin and a wide nose. She remained at Camulos while her soldier father, so embittered by the defeat of the Confederacy that he called himself an unreconstructed rebel and refused to take the oath of allegiance to the





Old Camulos Winery

Union, spent a year with Maximilian in Old Mexico and kept himself occupied building a railroad. It was Colonel Ridley who seven year later spent a night as a guest of the del Valles and in the morning saw from his window overlooking the garden the lovely half-Indian lass who was his daughter, born of an affair with a Piru Indian woman while he was stationed at Fort Tejon.

Dona Ysabel was both spiritual advisor and doctor to the simple folk who populated the ranch and surrounding countryside. When one of her own children was dying of diphtheria, there came to her door a neighbor whose wife was near death in childbirth. Without a moment's hesitation the Senora handed her own child to her mother, Asencion Avila de Varela, and went off into the night to save both mother and child. Choking and gasping for breath, her own little one survived the night only because Juventino cut open her throat with his pen knife.



Such a woman was Dona Ysabel. Married at 14 and the mother of 11 sons and daughters, she ruled Camulos with an iron hand—but also like a queen. Few California families have produced a woman of her caliber.

Adversity was no stranger to Ygnacio and Ysabel. In 1854 the del Valles were forced to fight for their lands in the United States courts, confirming their ownership after thousands of dollars had been paid into the hands of A. P. Crittenden and other attorneys to plead their case before the Land Commission. And in 1865 the del Valles were so impoverished by the disastrous drought of 1863-64, which decimated their vast herds, that all but 2,000 acres were sold to Thomas R. Bard. Bard, of course, was representing Thomas Scott, railroad magnate and Assistant Secretary of War under Abraham Lincoln. Only the land immediately surrounding the adobe was spared to the del Valles. Lands which today encompass the towns of Newhall and Saugus and most of the vast Newhall Ranch (42,664 acres) changed hands for \$53,330. Most of this went to meet the outstanding del Valle debts.

Of the 11 children born to Ygnacio and Ysabel, only six survived to see their Silver Wedding celebration in 1876. Ygnacio's declining years were spent reminiscing with his family at Camulos. In January, 1880, he was taken in serious condition to Sisters Hospital in Los Angeles, which he helped to establish. A few days later one of the sisters wrote in English to Reginaldo, who had been elected to the state legislature:

*"Mi querido Regi*—Allow me to congratulate you. You must now consider yourself with a status which will require of you a great tact, moderation, and a full regard for the aspirations and requirements of your brother Democrats. Be ever well posted in all matters, and be slow in giving your opinion. Be considerate of your fellow members and above all keep your dignity.

"You must not lay yourself liable to be considered as being vain—or swell up with your position. Be modest, and give no offense to anyone or hurt their feelings—by non-compliance—when you can just as well yield to their solicitations. The more modest and retiring you are, and the least puffed up, the greater your influence and power.

"Be fair to all, and kind. Don't speak too much, the less you talk the better. Be not subject to flattery too much, and keep yourself from delicate compromises or entanglements. See your way clear before you promise, and when you promise stick to it though the heavens fall.

"Pardon me for the advice, but it is probably the last time I may give it, and I know it will not be necessary to repeat it. God bless you, Ygnacio."

He returned to his House of Refuge to die. On March 29 Juventino galloped to the Western Union office in Newhall to wire Reginaldo in Sacramento: "Your father very ill, come quickly." Within 24 hours, before Reginaldo could come, he was dead.



Reginaldo could not bring himself to live at Camulos following his father's death. He stayed in Sacramento and maintained a house in Los Angeles, while his brother Ulpiano looked after things at the ranch. But the great days of the Camulos were over. By 1924 things had gone from bad to worse and to escape bankruptcy the del Valles were forced to sell their holdings.

A few years earlier a young Harvard graduate, August Rubel, had come west from New York with his wife, the former Mary Colgate. Walking down the gangplank of the *Ecuador* at San Francisco, they were soon driving for Santa Barbara. But in Los Alamos they were handed a ticket for speeding. The elderly justice of the peace, when he learned they were in the market for land, tore up the ticket and launched into a lecture on the wonders of some bean land he owned in Ventura County.

The Rubels drove straight through Santa Barbara, stopping overnight with an army buddy near Saticoy, and before long had bought an Aliso Canyon ranch and established the ill-fated Billiwhack Dairy. Later they learned through the grapevine that Camulos, which they had often admired as they drove past, was for sale. For a reputed one-half million dollars, the Rubels purchased Camulos. It had been privately appraised at \$720,725, and according to the *Los Angeles Times* the water rights alone were worth the purchase price.

On the 10th of August, 1924, was held the last of the barbecues which had become a Camulos tradition. Among the notables were Carrie Jacobs Bond, Walter Hoffman, Adolfo Camarillo, George Wharton James, Charles Wakefield Cadman, William S. Hart and the colorful author, traveler and editor, Charles F. Lummis, who had spent the previous year at Camulos recovering from a breakdown. For Lummis the sale of the ranch was a body blow.

"It will be 40 years in December since I visited Camulos," he wrote. "Since that time it has been like my home, and its people like my own. The old folks were like parents to me; and I have watched all the present generation (5) grow from youth to maturity. The romance, the traditions, the customs of Camulos are all familiar and all dear to me—not merely because they are Camulos but because this is the last stand of the patriarchial life of Spanish California, which has been so beautiful to the world for more than a century."

The next morning the *Times* echoed Lummis' lament:

"An era in the history of California closed yesterday. The del Valles of Camulos bade farewell to the homestead where they have lived in successive generations since Antonio del Valle. The passing of the del Valles is the passing of the old regime. They are said to be the last of the old Spanish families who held in unbroken succession to the ancestral acres."

So, indeed, ended an era.



## NOTES

1. Jose Antonio died on his 160-acre ranch at Nogal, Santa Barbara County, in 1853. He never married. Victor, at 13, died at Camulos in 1850. Of Ygnacio de Gracia we have no later record. Magdalena married first Dr. Henry G. Blankman of Los Angeles, while in her early teens, and later Ysidro Obiols of Ventura. A daughter, Dora, was born to them September 25, 1875 at *el Molino*, the Obiol's home on the Avenue. Jose Ygnacio homesteaded 160 acres near the Camulos, married Frances Stockton. Their children were George, Anita, Frances and Helen.

2. Jacob N. Bowman of the state archives in Sacramento says Alvarado did not grant the Lopez petition because he had no power to grant a mining claim. When Lopez petitioned Alvarado's successor, Micheltorena, for Rancho Temescal the following year it was a land grant, not a mining claim. Lopez' son Francisco, was born in 1865 and died February 6, 1936, in Los Angeles. Francisco was City Auditor until 1891.

3. Ygnacio's appointment, *encargado de justicia del placer de San Francisco rancho de la Mision de San Fernando*, was signed May 3, 1842, by Santiago Arguello, his former captain at Santa Barbara presidio. Shortly before the turn of the century George E. Cook, son of David Cook, reopened the San Feliciano mines and worked them for several years. "The most noticeable reminders of the early and vigorous search for gold," he wrote in the *Ventura Free Press* of July 28, 1899, "are the hundreds of old tunnels which riddle some of the gold-bearing hills and bars."

4. Helen Hunt Jackson notified Dona Ysabel del Valle in January, 1882, that she would like to stop over at the ranch on her way from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara. She was at the ranch the morning of the 23rd, spent a few hours talking to the household in the Senora's absence, and rode on to Santa Barbara that night. A careful check of Mrs. Jackson's letters, both published and those now at the ranch, and of the contemporary Los Angeles and Ventura County newspapers, failed to uncover any evidence that she ever visited Camulos again or that she talked in person to Dona Ysabel. Henry Sandham, the artist who illustrated *Ramona*, arrived at Camulos in April, 1883, and spent many days at his sketches. For a more extended treatment on the subject of Mrs. Jackson's visit to Camulos see *Helen Hunt Jackson* by Ruth Odell, New York, 1939, pages 177-178.

5. Only one survives of the older generation. She is Eliza Clotilde Nepomucena del Valle Cram, daughter of Juventino, born at Camulos in 1873 and now living in Los Angeles.

Ulpiano del Valle's widow, Elise, passed away at the age of 74 in Santa Monica last month. She was an early member of the Fillmore Ebell Club and a surviving daughter, Mrs. Virginia Johnson, is a graduate of Fillmore High School.

# The Sespe School District

BY CLARA H. SMITH

The original district known as the West Sespe included the land drained by the Sespe River and its tributaries, and also a portion of the land bordering the Santa Clara River. The eastern and western boundaries were the mountains, the southern boundary was the Santa Clara River. The region consisted of a Mexican land grant, and around the edge of this grant the white settlers established their homes.

A school for the white settlers' children naturally followed. In 1874 or '75 a schoolhouse was built on the north side of the Santa Clara River near the present site of the bridge crossing from Fillmore to Bardsdale. The builder was a Mr. F. A. Sprague. His son, Hartley, and daughter, Ida, hauled the lumber up from Ventura with team and wagon, and the father built the schoolhouse.

The first teacher was a Clara Skinner, followed by Clara Larson. Other teachers were Augusta Stevens, Maude Fisher, Ryal Sparks, and a man named Jordan. The last named showed his individuality by his way of dismissing the children at intermission. Not the "one, two, three, four," common in the schools of the period, but "Get out of here!"

The school building was of the prevailing type, a wooden structure, 20x30 feet, having three windows on each side. The height of the ceiling varied according to the judgment of different teachers. It is recorded as being 11, 12 and 16 feet.

About 1879 or 1880 the schoolhouse was moved from its place on the bank of the Santa Clara River to the east bank of the Sespe River, or "creek" as it was called. This was about a mile north of the present rail bridge crossing the Sespe, and was to give the school a more central place in the district. Here it stood in utter loneliness with only the roaring of the raging Sespe Creek in the winter, and the silence of the desert surroundings in summer. There were no trees, no shrubs, other than the sage brush to break the monotony.

A glance inside the door shows a water bucket with a tin dipper standing on the floor surrounded by waste water. The water has been carried up from the creek, and the children quench their thirst until the teacher bans further drinking. A book case to the left of the door houses one hundred fifty volumes, many of which are beyond the ability of the children to read. Supplementary reading material was unknown. The children sit in rows facing the teacher, whose chair and desk occupy a place on the platform at the other end of the room. Perchance an unruly child has a desk at her side. To the right of the teacher stands a manikin which shows the relative positions of the different organs of the human body. This is the nearest approach to instruction in hygiene which the children will receive. The three windows on the east side give plenty of heat in the forenoon, and those on the west side continue the warming process after lunch. Here the children of



these early settlers learn according to their own abilities, and according to the skill of the teacher. Those whose names appear on the reports of the period are: Goodenough, Jepson, Kellogg, Kenney, Akers, Fine and MacIntyre. There are no names of children born of foreign parents. Nor do the census reports show that there are any foreign born children in the school.

The teachers are employed for eight months at a salary of sixty dollars per month. There is one record of a teacher being employed two years in succession. This honor goes to Miss Anna Parsons who afterwards became a member of the Santa Paula school system. She had a record of being a superior teacher.

The chief agricultural products of the community were: grain and stock for the market, and grapes, olives, and garden produce for home consumption. It was not unusual for the children to be kept out of school to herd cattle or to help with the farm work.

The railroad was built in 1887, and soon afterwards a water company developed and distributed water from Sespe Creek. The growing of citrus fruit began. The population increased. Mexicans came to work in the orange and lemon groves.

Three districts were formed out of West Sespe and three schools were built; one further up the canyon was on what is now Grand Avenue, the second was the present San Cayetano and the third was Fillmore. San Cayetano became the school for the Mexican children.

Meanwhile the little pioneer school on the banks of the Sespe was moved to Fillmore. For awhile it was used for a schoolhouse. When no longer needed, a doctor, J. P. Hinckley, bought it and converted it into a drugstore with a residence in the rear. After more than sixty years of service it burned.

The writer recalls the faith the pioneers of the eighties had in the future of their community. They have passed on, but a few of their children are left to enjoy the fruits of their labor, and to see the marvelous changes that have taken place in this beautiful, fertile Sespe Valley.

Trustees serving the Sespe School District 1882-1888: R. Wilkins, I. C. Jepson, Cyrus Kenney, L. D. Kellogg, Mrs. L. D. Kellogg and O. J. Goodenough.

Editor's note: The late Clara Smith, author of this story, was an early day school teacher of the Sespe School District. She was a member of the Board of Education in later years. Her father, D. A. Smith, was a member of the Ventura County Board of Supervisors.

# Hueneme as a Grain Port

By MADELINE MIEDEMA

## PART II

No study of Hueneme as a grain port would be complete without a glimpse of the hinterlands from which the products of her trade came. Before taking up the subject of the various products shipped and the volume of trade, it might be well to get a picture of the surrounding country.

Before lima beans and sugar beets became the great crops of the Santa Clara Valley, the principal crops were barley, corn, and wheat. There was also considerable sheep and hog raising. The *Hueneme Herald* of May 26, 1888, gives the names of the great ranches which it calls "tributary country of Hueneme." These ranches were La Colonia, Guadalesca, Calleguas, Conejo, Santa Clara del Norte, Las Posas—some 300,000 acres.

In 1888 the *Hueneme Herald* stated, "About fourteen years ago a person after crossing the Santa Clara River going south had to push his way through a narrow path lined on each side as far as the eye could see with wild mustard standing ten to twelve feet high, and only once in a while you would come across a small farm with scarcely any improvements on it, while the majority of the good lands were left to roaming herds of sheep and cattle. But behold the difference now! In the place of all that wild vegetation that existed then, and instead of the few sheep camps you now find beautiful highways, lined on each side with hundreds of nice and well-conducted farms . . . Barley, beans, and corn form the staple products, and we export enough yearly of these commodities to cut quite a figure in the San Francisco market, and the price of barley in the state is often regulated by what the prospects are in our own county."

The grain grown on the big ranches south of the river was bought by the commission merchants of Hueneme. A. Levy advertised himself for years in the *Hueneme Herald* as a member of the San Francisco Produce Exchange and Call Board, with offices in San Francisco, and as a wholesale dealer and shipper of grain, wool, beans and produce. Wolff & Lehmann, Einstein & Bernheim and others bought crops.

Barley harvest came in August and September, and during those months and November the streets of Hueneme were full of long lines of grain wagons waiting to weigh in at the warehouses and unload their sacks of grain. The teams from the Conejo and Las Posas made the trip in two days, camping over night at Hueneme. Those from Vejar made the trip to Round Mountain, camped for the night, went to Hueneme the second day to unload, and returned to Round Mountain to camp the second night. The Simi teams took three days also, but camped at Springville rather than Round Mountain.



The newspapers usually contained such items as these. The first is news from Hueneme in the Ventura paper, August 10, 1886: "Grain continues coming in, and the long strings of teams can be seen almost any time of day waiting their turn to unload. The receipts Friday and Saturday were 9,350 sacks."

In the Hueneme *Herald* of July 27, 1893, we find the following: "On Tuesday there was almost a blockade of grain teams at the warehouse. In fact the entire business of our little town is taken up just now with the handling of our big grain crop . . . Owing to the danger of fire the Wharf Company has been obliged to prohibit the unhitching or feeding of teams and all camping within its enclosure."

Before leaving the matter of the tributary lands mention should be made of an event which greatly stimulated settlement in the Santa Clara region and indirectly the shipping in the port. This was the public auction in 1888 of 16,000 acres of La Colonia Rancho. Thomas A. Scott died in 1882, but for several years his estate was tied up in the courts. The Hueneme *Herald* said: "While the lock-up of the property of the estate in court has by the enhancement of values been of great pecuniary benefit to the estate, it has deprived Hueneme of the advantages of the boom prevailing all over Southern California, and has prevented the growth of the town in proportion to its great importance as a location for business and seaside residence purposes."

Mr. Bard, the administrator of the Scott estate, requested of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company excursion rates on the passenger steamers coming to Hueneme. Although the company wrote, "We have generally replied that requests were so frequent, that a compliance would amount to a permanent reduction," they nevertheless granted rates one-third off. A great crowd of people poured into Hueneme for the auction, held in front of the Hueneme Public Hall. The results of the sale were already noticeable in December of 1888.

The Hueneme *Herald*, December 13, 1888 read: "The beneficial results of the unlocking of the lands so long held in the estate of Thomas A. Scott, deceased, are becoming daily more and more apparent. In town many new houses are soon to be erected on lots purchased at the late public sale of lands and a drive through the valley shows new houses and barns in every direction . . . A vessel is now on its way from Puget Sound with half a million feet of lumber for Salisbury & Co. and two vessels of redwood for the new yard."

Barley was the chief product exported from Hueneme and always topped the lists of exports. Prosperity was measured by the barley crop. The average year saw about 300,000 sacks of barley brought to the warehouses. Some poor years brought fewer than 100,000 sacks. The famous year of 1893 saw over 500,000 sacks brought in. The *Herald* paints the picture of the busiest day of the 1893 season: "Last Friday was the liveliest day ever experienced at the warehouses, the receipts of barley, wheat and beans reaching 12,659 sacks. All day long there was a continuous line of teams extending from the warehouses past the



hotel. In all 175 teams came in, consisting of 264 wagons hauled by 821 horses. These teams if stretched out in single column with but two feet of space between each team, would extend a distance of nearly two miles."

One is able to place Ventura County in the total picture of California barley production by an article which appeared in the *Pacific Rural Press* in 1889. California as a whole produced 9,751,247 centals of barley; Ventura County 646,075 centals. The principal seeding was in San Joaquin, San Bernardino, and Monterey Counties, with Tulare, Ventura and Merced not far behind.

The volume of shipping from Hueneme during any one week or month depended on the barley market in San Francisco. "Shipping, which a week ago was very active, has slackened off a good deal owing to the weakness in the San Francisco barley market," says one newspaper. The same issue quotes "a recent letter from a San Francisco grainhouse":

"Hueneme has 'busted' the market and so long as these heavy shipments continue there is no hope for better prices. The market was just about recovering from the Weevil attack, and gradually assuming a better shape when it was deluged with Hueneme shipments which so glutted the market that prices receded and during the past week it has been very hard to make sales at even 67½. It should be borne in mind that a sick market is very sensitive and cannot stand much, and that Hueneme is a very important factor and shippers there should use ordinary judgment and give this market a chance to assume some strength before they attempt to overload it."

Barley, however, was not the only product shipped from Hueneme, although it was the largest. By 1890 the shipping of lima beans began to assume considerable proportions. In 1889 the Hueneme paper was able to write the following: "A local commission merchant the other day received a letter from a prominent bean merchant in San Francisco which stated in effect that instead of Ventura County obtaining information about the lima bean market from San Francisco, the latter city now had to obtain its quotations from here, as about seven-eighths of the business in this article was now done direct from here with the east."

In October of 1890 the first entire train load of beans was shipped by A. Levy. The steamer *Silver Spring* carried 2984 sacks of lima beans (110 tons) to San Pedro, where there were freight cars of the Union Pacific Railroad. A train of ten carloads of lima beans was made up destined for Denver, Kansas City, St. Joseph, Chicago, and New York. A photograph of the train was taken, and the picture of this "bean special" hung on the walls of the Boston Board of Trade for a while. The second trainload was shipped by A. Levy over the Santa Fe. There were twelve cars all labeled "Beans from A. Levy, Hueneme, California," in signs twenty feet long and three feet high.





Street Scene, Hueneme 1895

The Hueneme paper said that in 1887 the arrival of vessels was as follows: schooners, 23; steam schooners, 44; steamers, 169; total arrivals for 1887, 236. At the height of the grain shipping season in 1888 the *Herald* said, "Four steamers came into port, one bringing lumber, one to take on a cargo of grain for San Francisco, one to take oil for San Diego . . . At times as many as six steamers have been lying in the stream waiting for room at the wharf . . ."

In spite of the fact that the first issue of the Hueneme *Herald* said that "without doubt Hueneme has one of the best natural landings between San Francisco and San Diego," Hueneme had nothing but an open landing at the mercy of all the tides and winds of the sea. Items such as this were frequent in the papers, "The steamers *Santa Maria* and *Bonita* both passed by on Tuesday being unable to land owing to the roughness of the sea." Storms were sudden. In November 1890 while the steamer *Bonita* was loading at the wharf, the sea suddenly became rough. She had to cut her lines and leave in such a hurry that her purser was caught on shore. Another time, when the *Bonita* was overhauling the moorings at Hueneme, "a sudden gale sprang up from the west and she was obliged to put out to sea." Purser Gray was left on shore while Postmaster Taliaferro and Wharfinger Greenwell were carried out on an involuntary ocean voyage.

Mr. Bard once found it necessary to protest to the Oregon Improvement Company: "Your steamer *Al-Ki* arrived at our wharf yesterday morning, took aboard about 5000 sacks of barley up to last eve-



ning and is taking on cargo today. The weather and sea have been favorable for her, but last night she moved all our moorings which were overhauled only a week ago and laid heavily against the wharf. We must inform you that she is too large to lie here safely, and that in our opinion, with an ordinary rough sea she will carry away the wharf and consequently we must ask you not to send her again."

Sometimes vessels found themselves stuck on a sandbar or grounded on the beach. In November 1888 the schooner *Caesar Bruns* was lying at anchor waiting for a load of oil for San Diego. A heavy sea set in and the captain set the men to work to put her out to sea. Her windlass broke so that she could not use the anchors; consequently, she struck the beach. Captain Freeman telegraphed to San Francisco for a tug boat, but she was "warped off" by means of a hawser run to the spar buoy. Apparently she was able to proceed with the loading.

Some cargoes were lost by shipwreck. "The steam schooner *Julia H. Ray*, which sailed from here (Hueneme) last Friday loaded with wheat and barley by Messrs. Wolff & Levy and bound for San Francisco, went ashore at Point Conception the same night. The vessel was valued at \$24,000 and was insured . . . The cargo was only partially insured."

Sometimes the newspapers carried news of familiar ships wrecked farther up the coast. For example, "The schooner *Wm. L. Beebe* that has brought a good deal of lumber to this port and often loaded grain here, was wrecked at the entrance to San Francisco harbor on Monday." The sinking of the steamer *Los Angeles* in 1894 was a blow to coastwise shipping. It was familiar to many travelers up and down the coast. "The coasting steamer *Los Angeles* bound from southern ports for San Francisco strikes a sunken rock off Point Sur near Monterey at nine p.m. and sinks. A wild panic ensues but with the exception of five persons, all the passengers and crew were saved. One of those drowned was S. N. Sheridan, Sr., of Ventura."

Perhaps we should mention the Hueneme lighthouse before we leave the subject of perils to shipping. The government lighthouse was begun in April 1873. The revolving light, costing \$8000, had been made of glass and brass, condensed the rays of a light and threw them out to sea. The light itself was of the "brightness of a common house lamp."

In the '70's and '80's before the coming of the railroads travelers went up and down the coast as passengers on the coastwise steamers. Miss Beryl Bard writes, "The shipping that was done from the old Hueneme wharf . . . was for many years the sole method of shipping crops and getting supplies." And one might add that travel on the "grain fleet" was the most comfortable method of travel. When James P. Scott, son of Thomas A. Scott, visited his family property in November 1881, he and his family traveled to San Francisco by private car from Philadelphia and then by the steamer *Senator* to Hueneme.

The roads and stages in the county were very bad in the 80's if we may believe contemporary accounts. In winter stores ran out of



staples, coal oil, candles, coffee, crackers, because they could not send out orders. To get mail from Ventura it was sometimes necessary for some brave fellow to swim his horse over the Santa Clara River and return by steamer.

Even when the Southern Pacific came through Newhall, it was still a fifty-six mile trip by stage from Hueneme to Newhall. Some idea of this trip may be had from the Ventura paper of May 23, 1884 . . . "To say that the traveling public is dissatisfied with Allman's stage line to Newhall does not half express their feeling on the subject. They hold it in contempt. Many hire private teams for the trip rather than be subject to the inconvenience and annoyance. To pay ten cents a mile and then be thrust into an old worn out stage with express matter, trunks, valises, etc., piled up before you to the very ceiling and thus be compelled to ride in one position for fifty miles is enough to cause the most patient to complain. We advise eastern people who desire to visit Ventura to come by ocean steamer from Los Angeles or in a private conveyance."

As passengers on the ships, the people of the coast came to know the captains of the grain ships rather well. Popular captains received writeups in the papers of the time. The Ventura paper said in 1876, "Captain Johnson, who with his ship the *Constantine* has commenced running from this port, will rapidly become a favorite of our citizens who travel by sea. Though a young man, he is one of the most experienced captains on our coast, having been in the employment of the company many years. Besides he is a gentleman clear through. The steamer is one of the staunchest on the line, being built of iron, for the Alaska Commercial Company. By judicious loading Captain Johnson prevents the rolling to which most propellers are uncomfortably addicted, and a trip on this vessel will be both safe and pleasant." And from another paper of 1884: "The traveling public will be glad to learn that Captain Plummer has been permanently assigned to the *Eureka*. He is one of the most accommodating commanders on the coast. He has the happy faculty of showing his passengers that he is personally interested in their comfort and welfare while traveling on his ship."

Very few were the references in letters and newspapers to the crews on the ships of the grain fleet. A letter from Goodhall, Nelson & Perkins in 1872 says that the *Kalorama* was sailing minus two men to complete the crew. "At \$50 a month or any other rate it seems impossible to get more," complains the letter.

In the same letter the shipping company says that loading ships on Sunday is a necessity: "Now as to loading on Sunday, we dislike it, but in all open roadsteads or beach landings we find it absolutely necessary as the weather or the sea do not rage or roar according to the day of the week and in trying to do the business of the season we must try and take every advantage . . ."

The only hint of a strike in thirty years of shipping is in the following item from the Hueneme *Herald* of May 9, 1895: "The schooner *Fanny Dutard* arrived on Sunday with a cargo of pine lumber for the Ventura Lumber Company. On Monday some of the men on board



the vessel went on a strike, but the matter was adjusted by the captain and the men returned to work on Tuesday forenoon."

Hueneme declined as a grain port in the late 1890's because of diversion of lands to sugar beets, lima beans, and later citrus growing. But the coming of the railroad was the largest single cause of the decline of Hueneme as a port. In 1887 The Southern Pacific completed its line from Saugus and Newhall to Ventura. Montalvo, and to some extent Saticoy, became the shipping point for products from south of the river. By 1889 it was already apparent that measures must be taken by the Hueneme Wharf Company to combat this new competition. On May 29, 1889, Thomas R. Bard wrote to Goodall, Perkins & Company: "The production of beans upon lands in this vicinity for the present year is likely to be very large. The crop is new for this territory and in all probability will be increasing every year hereafter. It is one of the products which can bear transportation across the continent, and the various railroad companies are now in the field represented by agents soliciting for the transportation. You will readily see that it is to our interest to divert as much of this trade into channels which will require the product to pass over our wharf and be stored in our warehouses, and, so far as we may be able to prevent it, from being taken to Montalvo or Saticoy there to be put into the hands of the Southern Pacific Company. We have several ways of keeping this trade, but we think that it might be arranged that your company could effect arrangements by which it could have its share of the trade, and beg to inquire whether it is possible that a competing rate could be made for such products via your line and the Northern Pacific Railroad Company."

With the building of the sugar factory at Oxnard in 1898, the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks were carried across the river and eventually the route through Moorpark and Simi laid out. In 1898 D. T. Perkins wrote to F. W. Gerberding: "The Southern Pacific Railroad terminus now being at Oxnard brings us in closer competition with rail shipments and it is evident that at no distant date wharf rates on miscellaneous goods, now \$1.50 per ton, will have to be reduced to maintain business."

In 1901 Thomas R. Bard wrote to John P. Green, one of the stockholders in the Hueneme Wharf Company: "For some time Mr. Perkins and I have foreseen that the building of the Southern Pacific Railroad through our county must result in depriving the Hueneme Wharf Company of a very large share of the business it has heretofore been enjoying, and we have had in mind several projects, which would incidentally carry it out of present difficulties and perhaps result in improving conditions — among which is the building of another sugar factory at Hueneme, which alone would induce the Southern Pacific Company to give us railroad connections."

But it was a losing fight. The Southern Pacific never came to Hueneme, and in 1906 the wharf property was sold for \$40,000, less than one-third the price once asked for it.



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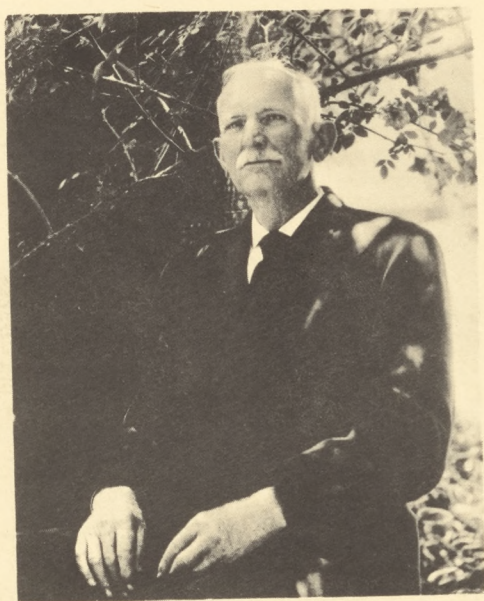
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J. Edward Borchard

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## Dr. Bard and Anthrax

Readers of the *Quarterly* will recall past references to the published writings of Cephas L. Bard, M.D. Not only are these interesting from a purely medical standpoint, but some contain little known information of historical importance. Dr. Bard's treatise, entitled *The Ravages of the Bacillus Anthracis in California*, falls within this category. This twelve-page pamphlet is so rare that the editor of the *Quarterly* has been able to locate only one copy, in the University of California Library.

The average reader may question the historical interest in a subject such as anthrax, but the price paid by stock and sheep men over the past eighty years because of this range disease would add up to a staggering total. Dr. Bard estimated that the losses up to the early 1890's, when his findings were published, ran as high as 106,000 head in the infected southern counties of the state. Add to this the losses after Dr. Bard made public his work in this field, plus the costs of the preventative measures outlined by him, and some idea of the economic results of anthrax will be apparent. The later introduction of effective vaccines, while preventing high losses in the herds by death, proved expensive and added even more to the total cost this scourge brought to the county.

Many of our readers interested in the cattle business have asked that we reprint Dr. Bard's work on anthrax. Some portions are too technical for general interest, and the treatise is too long to republish in full. The editor has, therefore, deleted the less interesting passages in offering to our readers Dr. Bard's story of anthrax and how it was introduced into Ventura County and Southern California. It should be remembered that Bard was the first medical man in the state to recognize the true nature of the disease that was decimating the herds on the range and to publish effective countermeasures to offset it.

# The First Rincon Highway

By R. G. PERCY

Between the city of San Buenaventura and the Santa Barbara County line lies a stretch of the coastline where the mountains come down to the sea. It is known as *El Rincon*, a name given to it by some forgotten Spaniard, and meaning corner or nook. For many years it proved to be a barrier for travelers going north or south, because there were places where one could only pass at low tide on the wet sands of the beach. At high tide the waves of the sea dashed against the white cliffs of the mountains.

Don Gaspar de Portola, with his men on their way north in search of the Bay of Monterey, was the first white man to travel this way. It is probable that he, like many others since, was forced to hold up the passage of his men and mules until the tide receded leaving a narrow strip of wet sand over which they could pass.

Many another traveler came this way in the years that followed. Father Junipero Serra as he traveled from mission to mission on foot; Spanish soldiers on horseback, for the Spaniards came to conquer with the Cross in one hand and the sword in the other, were forced to wait here for time and tide. Then came the rancheros on horseback as they journeyed from rancho to rancho, and there were two wheeled carretas drawn by plodding oxen. There was no other way to go from San Buenaventura to Santa Barbara unless one climbed over steep mountain trails through the chaparral.

The army of Governor Alvarado marched south along this route to put down the rebellion led by the Carrillos and Picos of Los Angeles. The army of the south waited at San Buenaventura and made no effort to halt the advance of the northerners as they came along this narrow passage. Instead they met them in the almost bloodless Battle of San Buenaventura. John C. Fremont led his buckskin clad mountain men and Indians by this same path during the conquest of California. Undoubtedly Juan Flaco passed this way on what was one of the famous horseback rides of history as he rode from Los Angeles to Monterey and then on to San Francisco to get help for Lt. Gillespie besieged in Los Angeles by angry Californians. Probably they all had to wait here for low tide in order to pass.

When American settlers came to replace the California rancheros, a stage line from Los Angeles to San Francisco traveled *El Rincon*. Often they drove through the breaking waves at the base of the cliffs as the tide receded, and there came to be a semblance of a road in places. Except where the cliffs rose from the sea, a single track followed a narrow shelf between the hills and the beach. In three places there was no choice but to turn out onto the wet, hard packed sands in order to pass, and the ocean remained a barrier to a road(1).



In the late 1870's a wagon road was built through the Casitas Pass. It followed up the canyon of the Coyote Creek, crossed over the pass on a narrow, steep, winding road into the middle Casitas, and then over another grade to come down into the Carpinteria Valley. It was a longer, more difficult road, and often closed by washouts and slides during the winter months. Stages and most travelers continued to follow *El Rincon*.

In 1887 the Southern Pacific railroad built north as far as Santa Barbara, carving out a narrow roadbed from the white cliffs above the high tide mark. This eliminated any possibility of a wagon road in those places where the mountains came down to the sea. For many years thereafter travelers by horseback, buggy or wagon still had to wait on the tide or take the long way around by the Casitas Pass Road with its narrow, winding mountain grades.

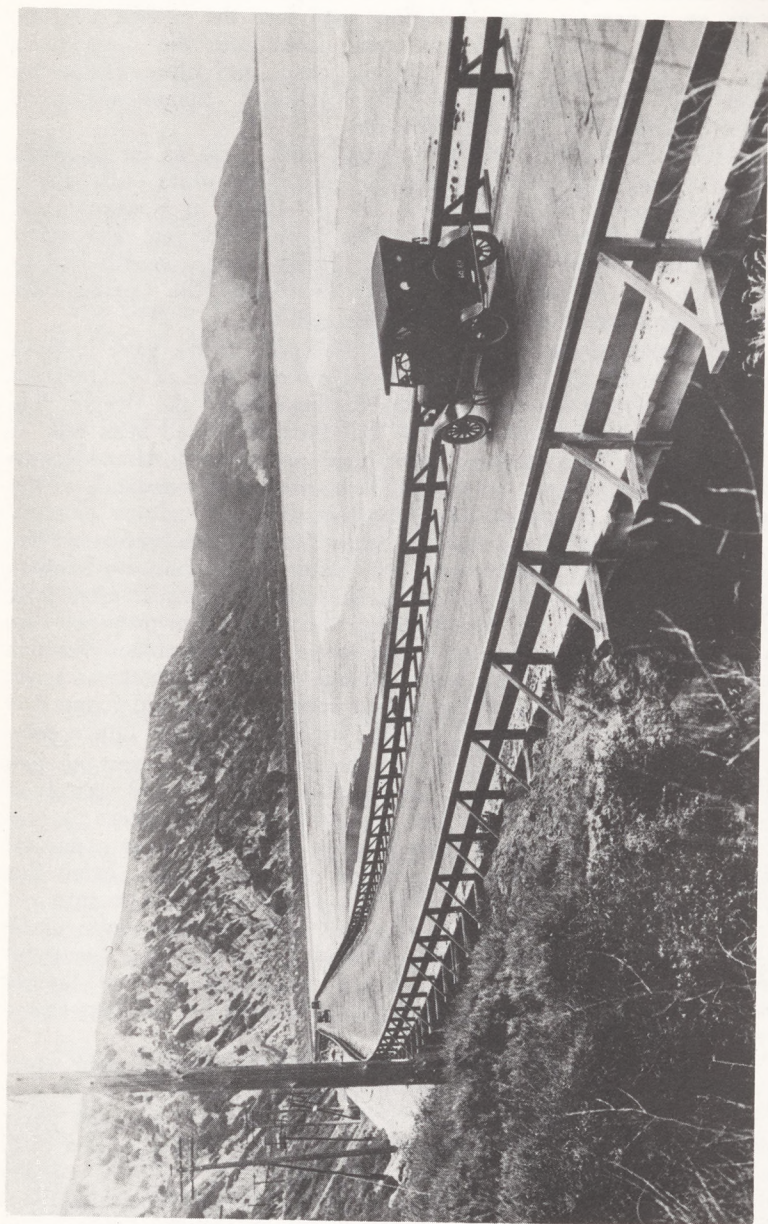
The coming of the automobile in the early 1900's gave impetus to good roads. In 1911 California voted a bond issue of \$18,000,000 for a system of paved roads to cover the state from the Oregon line to the Mexican border. Even before that time there had been talk of a road along *El Rincon* that an automobile could travel. Horse drawn vehicles could travel over the sand hills or along the wet sands of the beach at low tide, but a gasoline buggy could not.

In March of 1910 a group of Santa Barbara men proposed the incorporation of a toll road company to build a road from the Ventura River to Rincon Point. E. P. Ripley, H. J. Doulton, E. T. Underhill, J. R. Fithian and H. L. Smith were the men who proposed the incorporation of the company to secure a franchise from Ventura County to build and operate such a road. Ventura County was not receptive to the idea. It was feared that such a plan would jeopardize the taking over of the route for a state highway at some future date.

There were five road blocks in the thirteen miles west of San Buenaventura. The first was the Ventura River. The second was about three miles west, where the first sea wall is today. Here it was necessary to travel for about three-quarters of a mile over a narrow strip of sand hills between the railroad and the beach. From Sea Cliff Creek past the white cliffs of Punta Gorda, one had to turn out onto the beach and pass at low tide. At high tide the waves broke high up on the cliffs below the railroad track. Beyond this point were two more such places before one reached the county line at Rincon Creek. These could be made passable only by building causeways over the sea.

The original idea to build causeways on the Rincon came from W. A. Hobson. In 1910 Mr. Hobson had taken his family on a tour of Europe. While traveling from Cannes to Monte Carlo the party came to a region where the topography was similar to that at Sea Cliff. The road builders had surmounted the difficulty by building wooden causeways over the ocean. Hobson was immediately enthusiastic about this method of circumventing the tides, and he became impatient to return home to put the plan into effect.





The Punta Gorda causeway, circa 1920



Santa Barbara was particularly interested in having a road along the Rincon which an automobile could travel. Milo M. Potter, owner and manager of the Potter Hotel in Santa Barbara, invited a group of Ventura men to the hotel for a conference with interested men of that city. W. A. Hobson, John Lagomarsino, and Sol Sheridan, the latter then Secretary of the Ventura Chamber of Commerce, attended the meeting from Ventura. It was decided to put the matter of building such causeways up to the chambers of commerce of the two cities and to try and raise the money by subscription. The causeways were then to be turned over to the state highway department at a later date.

Louis Jones, President of the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce, Philip Rice, Chairman of their Good Roads Committee, and Sol Sheridan of Ventura were the committee to take up the matter of raising the money. The Ventura County Supervisors agreed to build a bridge over the Ventura River and turn it over to the state later. The plan was to raise \$50,000 by popular subscription to build the causeways. Meetings were held in towns from Santa Maria to Los Angeles, and the newspapers gave their support. Approximately \$40,000 was raised in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties, with a minimum amount of that sum from Los Angeles County. Even the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce donated \$5,000(2).

On November 10, 1911, the contract for building the three causeways was let for approximately \$35,000. On June 28, 1912, the Ventura County Supervisors let the contract for building the bridge over the Ventura River. It was to be a concrete structure designed by Charles Petit, then Deputy County Surveyor under Ernest Everett. Work of building the bridge started in the fall of 1912, and it was opened to traffic on July 4, 1913.

The causeways were built of eucalyptus piling with a minimum diameter of ten inches. Heavy planks were used for the decking with railings on either side. By March 1, 1912, twenty-six hundred feet of the causeways from the west end had been completed between Rincon Point and Punta Gorda. There were three of these wooden causeways over the sea. The most westerly one at Rincon Point was 1,200 feet long, the middle one 400 feet and the one at Punta Gorda was 4,400 feet.

The piling was completed by the latter part of March, 1912, but there were not enough funds to complete the planking. The state highway department had begun surveying along the Rincon at about this time, and on August 30th of the same year agreed to take over the Rincon road. A few days later it was announced that they would complete the causeways, and in time would build a paved road on the balance of the highway. The causeways were completed in the fall of 1912.

Still there was no road that an automobile could travel. The sand hills where the first sea wall is today was the first barrier. There was no bridge over Sea Cliff Creek, and no approach from there to the



east end of the Punta Gorda causeway. The entire old wagon road was in bad shape and needed grading and smoothing. A paved road was something for the future when the state could get at it.

After crossing the Ventura River, the old road followed along the north side of the railroad for about three miles and climbed over a point of the hills on a grade. Beyond the grade it crossed the railroad to the narrow strip of sand hills between the railroad and the beach for about three-quarters of a mile before coming out onto solid ground again. From there to Sea Cliff Creek the road paralleled the railroad tracks on the seaward side.

An item from the *Ventura Free Press* of October 18, 1912, states: "The Rincon Road will be opened in two weeks. Gird Percy with a crew of 20 men and teams will shape up the bad spots and build a temporary bridge across Sea Cliff Creek, and the Automobile Club of Southern California will pay for this work." The Auto Club turned over \$1,000 to Supervisor Tom Clark and E. P. Foster, President of the Bank of Ventura.

I had received the sprinkling contract for several miles of Ventura Avenue earlier in 1912, and was in charge of keeping the county roads in shape in the lower part of Supervisor Clark's district. Clark and Mr. Foster came to me and said, "We want you to put the Rincon in shape so that an automobile can travel it. We'll put the \$1,000 in the bank for you to draw on."

"Just what do you want me to do?" I asked.

"Grade the entire road," said Clark. "Haul clay to make a road over those sand hills after you cross the railroad track, build a bridge over Sea Cliff Creek, and a road from there onto the first causeway."

Those were the instructions that I received, and neither Mr. Foster nor Supervisor Clark ever came to see what was being done. One thousand dollars would not even set the stakes for a mile of road today; but we had no stakes, no blue prints and no engineering. In fact, we did not even have a definite idea of where the county right-of-way for a road actually was. We were to follow the old wagon road that existed and build a road where it was needed. And that was that.

I established a camp on the Rincon, with a cook wagon and a tent for the men to sleep in. I hired men and some teams besides my own and went to work. It might be interesting to know the wages that were paid. Men received \$2.00 per day; a man and team, \$4.00; a man and four horses, \$6.00. I received \$5.00 per day for being boss of the job: remove the rocks and grade thirteen miles of road; cover the three-quarters of a mile of sand hills with twelve inches of clay; build a bridge and a half mile of new road for the east approach to the first causeway; and \$1,000 to do it with!

There was no eight-hour day in 1912. We worked from 7 A.M. to 6 P.M., with an hour for lunch. Clay was hauled from the hills to cover the sand hills a foot deep and one track wide. The camp was then moved to Sea Cliff Creek. After each day's work, I drove home



to Ventura Avenue with my horse and buggy. Hobson Brothers Butcher Shop was open by five o'clock each morning; and I was there to pick up fresh meat and supplies for the camp cook, arriving back on the job by seven o'clock. We did not think of overtime in those days. A job was to be done, and we did it. I was twenty-three years old at the time, and the responsibility for seeing that the road was finished was mine.

A temporary bridge was built over Sea Cliff Creek. Three more shorter ones spanned barrancas coming down from the cliffs on the approach to the first causeway, and a road was carved out of the half mile of bench leading up onto the causeway. One day I drove my horse and buggy over the partially completed roadway on to the causeway and to the far end and back.

Supervisor Clark had said to me, "Just as soon as an auto can get over the road, telephone me. I want to be the first one to drive one over the Rincon."

One evening when I drove hime, I phoned him and told him he could drive over the road on the following day.

"I'll be there about nine o'clock," he answered. "Don't tell anyone else."

I did not, but shortly after work started the next morning we heard the chug-chug of an automobile coming from Ventura. It was not Supervisor Clark but Judge Robert M. Clarke (no relation) and Earl Moss, the court reporter, in Earl's car.

"I knew that you were working on the road, Gird," said the judge. "I'm holding court in Santa Barbara today, and Earl and I decided to take a chance. We figured that you would help us with a team if we needed help."

Judge Clarke and Earl Moss were the first ones to drive a car over the Rincon and its causeways from Ventura to Santa Barbara. Tom Clark arrived about nine o'clock; and when I told him, he hit the ceiling. He was red-headed and Irish and had a bad temper. He soon cooled off though, for there was nothing that I could have done about it. I could not turn back the Superior Court Judge very well when he was due in Santa Barbara.

The Auto Club also wanted to know just as soon as the road was open, and Supervisor Clark notified them. On November 1, 1912, Tom Clark, Sol Sheridan, George Farrand, and A. McAndrews drove over the road from Ventura to the Arlington Hotel in Santa Barbara making the 29 miles in one hour and a half. The trip was made in McAndrews' car. The Rincon road was open, and on the 22nd the state began the construction of a sea wall where we had built the clay road over the sand hills.

It was on November 29, 1912, that the Auto Club made a run from Los Angeles to Santa Barbara with approximately 100 cars participating. The drive was made up one day and back the next to officially open the road. The heavy traffic did not help the newly

built clay road which was not packed down yet. Car wheels cut through the clay to the sand. The thousand dollars had been used up and there was no money left with which to make repairs. The newly graded road was deep in dust.

Once more Tom Clark came to me. "We'll have to run a grader over the road and sprinkle it," he said. "My district road fund is broke, but go ahead and do the work. You'll have to hold county warrants until tax money comes in."

I graded the road and sprinkled it. We filled the sprinkling tank with a hand pump at the Ventura River and later at Sea Cliff Creek, and put the road back into shape. Mr. Foster cashed the warrants, and held them until the district had the money to pay them.

Eventually the Rincon highway was paved sixteen feet wide by the state. On December 15, 1914, I was appointed County Forester, and one of the first things that I was told to do was to beautify the Rincon highway. Many of the trees that we planted have given way to the widening of the highway, but still here and there some of them can be seen. The wooden causeways lasted for about ten years, when they were replaced by sea walls and earth fills. Few who travel the Rincon highway today can visualize what it was like in 1912, or that it was necessary to wait on the tide to pass that way, even on horseback.

#### NOTES

1. There is some evidence of a "road" having been in existence around the base of the cliffs at Punta Gorda prior to 1877. The *Ventura Free Press* of September 29, 1911, makes mention of this fact and states the road was abandoned with the completion of the Casitas Pass road in 1877. With the building of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1887, that portion of the old county road which was cut into the cliffs was deeded as right-of-way to the Espee. This was the age of great expansion by the railroads; and with the era of the horseless carriage still in the unforeseeable future, it was a logical deed for the county to grant to the railroad.

2. The San Francisco World's Fair accounts for this \$5,000 donation. The Bay City chamber of commerce was anxious for roads that would enable the state's southern population to motor to the fair.

Dates and other data have been checked from the files of the *Ventura Free Press*. Other matters in connection with the first Rincon road are as I remember building it. R.G.P.

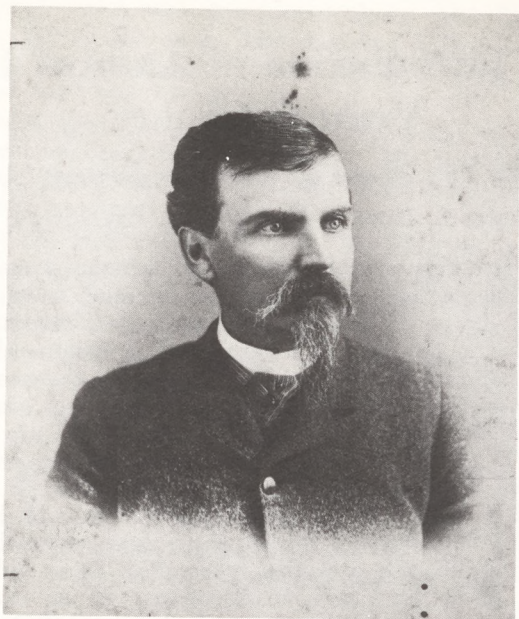


# The Introduction of Anthrax Into Ventura County

Excerpts from *The Ravages of the Bacillus Anthracis in California*

By CEPHAS L. BARD, M.D., VENTURA, CALIFORNIA, 1894

Anthrax is a very ancient malady and there exist many allusions to it by the older writers. The "grievous murrain" which swept from the plains of Egypt the herds of cattle, horses, camels, asses, and sheep, was due to the little micro-organism so assiduously cultivated by the bacteriologist. It is interesting to note in the account of this epidemic as described in *Exodus*, that the disease was confined to the herbivora, and that there is no mention of the carnivora succumbing to it. Virgil in the *Third Georgic* describes a murrain which is generally accepted as being identical with splenic fever. It is supposed to be the "black blane" of the old English writers, and the "elf-shot" creatures of the all-observant Shakespeare's fancy were those affected with it. No other disease, excepting tuberculosis, is so widely diffused, and but few others have been so disastrous. As an example of its ravages, it may be stated that in a single year, 1864, seventy-two thousand horses were destroyed by it in Russia. Bollinger states that in the Province of Novgorod, during a period of four years, more than 56,000 animals, including horses, cattle and sheep, as well as 555 men fell victims to it. While every portion of the globe has witnessed outbreaks of it, some countries, owing to the character of the soil and climate, have been the greatest sufferers. . . . It is said to be the disease, which, prior to 1850, the year in which the bacillus was discovered and its causal relationship established, destroyed many animals in the southern and southwestern states of our country. Gross states that it existed in New York State during the years 1870 to 1880. Sternberg, in his *Manual of Bacteriology*, the only standard work in America, states that anthrax does not exist in the United States. Coming from an infected district, and intimately associated with the treatment of the disease, so far as man is concerned, at least, I am prepared to say that the soil of certain sections of our state is polluted by the presence of the bacillus anthracis, and has been so for more than twenty years, during which period there have been frequent outbreaks of the disease in animals, so frequent, in fact, that anthrax may be said to be enzootic in the mentioned section. Its diagnosis has not only been substantiated by the characteristic symptoms, and its transmission to man in a local form, but has been confirmed by finding the bacillus in the blood of affected animals by the use of the microscope in skillful hands. The region referred to, so far as my knowledge goes, comprises portions of the counties Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, Kern and Ventura . . .



Cephas L. Bard, M. D.

The literature pertaining to the malady as it appears in the infected counties is limited, consisting of but two papers, one by Dr. D. Granville MacGowan, late health officer of the city of Los Angeles, and the other by myself. . . . In my present description of the appearance and existence of the disease, I confine myself to the results of my observations in my own county, where I have practiced medicine for more than a quarter of a century.

In the summer of 1872, a Basque sheep-herder, Peter Edouart by name, sojourning near Bakersfield, placed in his band of sheep, 5,000 in number, some bucks which had been imported from an infected district of France. Shortly after this acquisition, the animals began to die from the effects of a disease which to the owner was unknown. Concluding that it might be due to the heat or other causes, he started toward the cooler country of the coast. Descending the San Francisquito Cañon, he proceeded to San Fernando, and from there to the plains of Ventura County. In six weeks he lost more than half of his flock, and the localities where it grazed are infected to this day. Quoting from my previous article, "they have been swept by fire; deluged by rain; torn up by the plow; exposed to the glaring heat of a southern sun; deserted for years at a time; but the resumption of their use as a range has invariably resulted in an outbreak of the disease."



One of these ranges, two years after its infection by Edouart's band, was rented by a sheep man who placed on it a band of 8,000 sheep. Shortly after its occupation, the malady appeared, and in two years' time the owner, who was stubborn, deaf to advice from others, and determined to remain, lost every one of them. On the same ranch, a few years later, the majority of a band of cattle, 700 in number, succumbed to the same disease.

Last November a firm of cattlemen leased an infected ranch upon which 750 indigenous cattle were at the time grazing. No manifestation of the disease had occurred for years. The importation of 195 head from an uninfected locality, but fifteen miles away, was followed by the appearance of the disease, which virtually carried away every one of them. Nine hundred more were brought in from Arizona, and of these 600 perished, the remainder being saved by their removal. The cattle which were native to the ranch were not infected. The process of infection since its inception has steadily progressed, so that many places in the mentioned counties are for the time being unfit for grazing purposes.

Plethora is a predisposing cause, and fat animals—those prepared for the market—are most apt to succumb to it. It is roughly estimated that the mortality in the entire infected district since its appearance is 6,000 cattle, and more than 100,000 sheep. The outbreaks do not occur annually and are more apt to occur in those years characterized by wet winters, followed by very hot summers. A few horses used by vaqueros on the infected ranches have died, but there is no record of any epidemic occurring among them, as the ranges have never been devoted to them. Hogs, especially those fed upon infected carcasses and those grazing in infected regions, invariably perish. So do goats which accompany the bands of sheep. The infected district is noticeably deprived of deer, hare, and the swarming colonies of rabbits and spermophiles. The quail which feed on infected soil, and the buzzards which claim the carcasses as their prey are not affected. Chickens which share the lot of the herder in his peregrinations are immune, and there is no evidence that the trout streams have been polluted by the death of their finny occupants. The assertion that the carnivora are exempt is verified by my observation. The shepherd's dog and the thieving coyote feed on diseased flesh with impunity. "Although the disease in animals," quoting again from my former article, "is usually manifested in the internal form, we, as physicians, have been brought in contact solely with its external manifestations. No splenic fever occurring in man has yet been recorded in Southern California. One sudden death noticed in my field of work has been generally attributed by sheep men to eating the flesh of a sheep which had succumbed to the disease. Who knows but what some other deaths happening in remote localities, where the diagnosis has been obscure, may have been due to this form? . . ." Since the appearance of the disease there have been at least 100 cases of malignant pustule in Ventura County. They have corresponded in every particular to the



description already given, and with one exception were situated in exposed portions of the body . . .

One case in a man, situated on the arm near the shoulder, was due, I think, to the medium of a tick. I have never seen a case transmitted from man to man or from man to animal. All of my cases, with the exception of one, resulted in recovery.

The fatal case, the first and only one to occur in Ventura County, was, with the two fatal cases recorded by Dr. D. G. McGowan, the third and last recorded in California. Its particulars and those of the subsequent autopsy, the only one ever made in California, and quite possibly in America, are fully described in my other article. . .

What can be done to suppress this standing menace to a waning but nevertheless an important industry? What action can be taken to prevent contamination of our soil, infection of our herds, inoculation of their guardians, and the pollution of the poor workingmen in distant factories? That the disease will continue to exist is a prediction in accordance with our knowledge of its characteristics. California furnishes the most favorable predisposing causes: nutritious grasses inducing plethora; alternation of cold nights with warm days; rich alluvial soil; and wet winters succeeded, especially in the interior valleys, by hot summers. . .

The stock owner can do much for himself and charge unaided by the agency of the law. Drainage and cultivation of the range will materially diminish the chance of contamination. . . He can protect his flock from the importation of infected stock. In the event of an outbreak, by leaving his range and keeping his animals in motion, he can manage to save the bulk of them. The only effectual method of preventing future contamination consists in destruction of the carcasses of those which have succumbed to the disease. This can be done by burning them or burying them deeply in the soil. Owing to the prevailing scarcity of fuel, especially on our treeless plains, the first method is not very practicable. Owing to the disinclination of the herder the second is never fully accomplished, the body usually being deposited just beneath the sod. Burial at the depth of six feet is quite effectual. . .

With out the heavy hand of the law, however, but little can be done to stamp out this scourge so menacing to our industries. It should be invoked to prevent importation of diseased animals; to compel owners to destroy at once the carcasses of those which have died; and to make it a penal offense to sell infected meat, or to ship hides removed from diseased animals. These measures can be obtained by the appointment of an inspector who would rigidly enforce the enactments, or by some other form of legislation.

*"Nor do those ills on single bodies prey,  
But oftener bring the nation to decay  
And sweep the present stock and future hope away."*



# The History of Colonia School

BY HENRY BORCHARD

In writing this brief history of the Colonia School, I am doing so with a great deal of pleasure and pride, for it was my Alma Mater and also the Alma Mater of my wife, who was then Kathryn McLoughlin. The first day Colonia School started was the first day of school for both of us. Colonia is one of the pioneer land marks as a school building in Ventura County, and is the only school in this area still in operation in the same structure as it was when originally built (1).

Colonia is located on Gonzales Road, about one mile west of the junction of Ventura and Gonzales Roads. Located in a rural area when it was originally established, it is still one of the richest farming sections of Ventura County. It is surrounded by lima bean fields and lemon orchards. We old-timers, when passing the schoolhouse, look over and say. "There is the institution which furnished the foundation of our education for our chosen way of life."

Colonia School was built in 1886, shortly after the district was formed. It was bounded on the north by the Santa Clara River, on the east by Saviers Road (now 101 Alternate), on the south by what is now West Fifth Street, and on the west by the Pacific Ocean. The boundary lines have been changed since, reducing this area considerably. The district is still good size, area wise. It is comprised of an area of about twenty square miles. Colonia has never had a bonded indebtedness, never having resorted to the use of bonds in its financial program.

The first three trustees of Colonia were Dominic McGrath, Mark McLoughlin (my father-in-law) and J. Edward Borchard (my father). The last three trustees are J. P. Rorrick, who served 14 years; Thomas Connelly, 26 years; and Henry Borchard, 40 years.

Before the district was formed, the pupils of this area went to San Pedro School. San Pedro was located on the east side of Saviers Road one-half mile north of Oxnard city limits. Names of some of the pupils from this locality going to San Pedro and later transferring to Colonia were: Henry Loty, Emma Eggleston, Eva Saviers, Thomas McLoughlin, William Borchard, Frank Borchard, Mrs. Nellie Leonard (then Nellie McGrath) and Mrs. Lisabeth McGrath McCormick.

The first classes in the Colonia District were held in the residence of J. B. Alvord, the first teacher. His residence was located just east of, and adjoining, the present school. Classes were held here for about a year, during which time an acre of land was purchased from the same Mr. Alvord and a one room school building was erected. A few years later another one-half acre was purchased and an addition was built onto the schoolhouse. This was necessary because of the growing population, and more room was needed for athletic activities.

The daily attendance was very irregular, the big boys going to school one day, then piling beans the next. After the beans were all piled, they would go back to school. At other times they would stay home to help with the hoeing. The big girls very often stayed home from school on Mondays so as to help their mothers with the washing and ironing.

The school building was just a one room wooden structure built on the ground, not even a concrete foundation to stand on. It remained a one room school quite a few years, teaching all nine grades. Along about 1930 a cafeteria was built on, serving the pupils meals. We were at that time in a deep depression, and many of the pupils were not properly fed. They depended a great deal on what they got from the cafeteria as their main meal. The school population continued to grow so that about 1940 the cafeteria was enlarged and turned into another classroom.

The people living in the district at the time it was formed were mostly American with a few Spanish. The American origins were mostly Irish and German, with the Irish predominating. The population was not of the floating kind; they were and still are so permanent that the same names of families we had then still exist in this area. The ranches are passed down from one generation to another, and to the present time still remain in the same family name.

The names of some of the families whose children attended the early school years were: McGrath, eight children; Borchard, nine children; McLoughlin, six children; Connelly, nine children; Scarlett, four children; Eggleston, Saviers, Moe, Revelon, Gill, Haddock, Butterfeild, Stark, Henry, Lewis, Hodges, Gonzales, and Olivas. When the older members of the family were graduating, the younger members were just starting to school. Many of the first students and graduates of the Colonia School are still living in our midst.

The names of other teachers following Mr. Alvord, the first teacher, were Mr. McClure, Miss Frates, Miss McComb, Professor Kyle, Miss Sheldon, and Emma McCarthy.

The Mr. Kyle referred to above did not last very long as a teacher in this school. One day the boys started roughing one another up and tearing off each others hats. Mr. Kyle, who always kept a good supply of whips, came out and started to give the boys a whipping. When he got to the big boys they stopped him, daring him to touch them and bluffing him. This was about two weeks before Christmas vacation, at which time Mr. Kyle walked out. The trustees had to hire a new teacher to finish the term. Elvin Haydock, who lives in Montalvo, has a big scar on one of his legs, which is evidence of how severe Kyle could be.

Mr. Alvord was a very free and easy going man. Nothing bothered him much except when his youngsters would get into a row with the other boys, and that was quite often. Alvord always took his boys' side, never letting them battle for themselves. At noon, when he was tired,





Colonia Schoolhouse

he would lie down on the floor and use a big dictionary for a pillow and go to sleep. When he overslept, the youngsters would peek in the windows and wake him up.

In the early days a grammar school had nine grades instead of eight as we have today. The course was principally reading, writing, arithmetic, and spelling (after the ABC's were learned). The mathematics in the ninth grade consisted of algebra, geometry, and some trigonometry. English, Latin and physiology were also taught. Pupils graduated from the ninth grade at that time were full grown young men and women, even more than they are graduating from high school today.

Spelling matches were a common practice, always on a Friday afternoon. Often the boys would spell against the girls, and the girls usually won. Playground activities consisted of tom-ball, pump-pump-pull-away, crack the whip, shinny, marbles, leap frog, jump rope, baseball and calisthenics.

Whenever a dance was held in the community, it was usually held in the schoolhouse. People from all over the valley south of the river would attend, coming from as far away as Camarillo, Somis and Hueneme by horse and buggy. Music for these dances was furnished by the Gonzales and Borchard Orchestra, consisting of two violins and two guitars. Sometimes the orchestra was helped by Ed Butterfield. The violin he played was made by his father, who was a handy cabinet maker. The dances were noted for exceptionally good

times and lasted until the wee hours of the morning with many farm boys getting home just in time to harness their horses and go to work in the fields.

There was no such thing as electricity to light the house or gas to heat it. The light was furnished by kerosene lamps which were suspended from the ceiling and hung from the side walls. Heat was furnished from wood stoves fed with cordwood.

Teachers always lived some place in the community, rooming and boarding at some of the ranch houses. It was part of the trustees' job to find a boarding place for the teachers. The only means of transportation was by horse and buggy, or cart. It was only the long distance pupil who drove to school, as most of them walked. There were a few high wheeled bicycles. The teacher's salary was eighty dollars per month. The boys did the janitor work, and the trustees did the clerical and repair work.

Colonia stands as a landmark as one of the few original school-houses in Ventura County still standing and in good condition. It has been well preserved, and is just as serviceable as if it were recently built. The community regards it as the institution from which many received training that was preparation to go forth to meet the problems of life. The steady expansion and growth of Oxnard to the northwest into the Colonia School District made the trustees of Colonia realize they would soon be overcrowded. Therefore, they made an agreement with the trustees of Oxnard to have the pupils from Fremont Square, which is in the Colonia District, go to school in Oxnard, paying for the privilege on a tuition basis. This agreement is only for this year, 1957-58.

To buy more land and build a large school would cost more than it would be possible to raise with a bond issue. Therefore, there was only one thing to do, apply to annex to Oxnard. Oxnard agreed to accept Colonia. A petition was circulated and signed by 100% of those eligible to sign. The signed petition was presented to Superintendent of Schools Dean Triggs; and an election was called for January 14, 1958. The election carried by 43 to 5 votes. So on July 1, 1958, Colonia School will be absorbed into the Oxnard School system.

We old-timers are very sorry to see that grand old institution close its doors. We have watched it work for nearly three-quarters of a century teaching the youngsters of today who are the men and women of tomorrow, the people upon whom the destiny of our country rests. We aimed to teach them Love of God, Love of Country, high standards of morals, and preserve our American freedom and liberty against the slavery of communism.

Progress has come upon us. That means that grand old pioneer school which was built for us with that wonderful pioneer spirit will close its doors to any more teaching. Long may the memory of Colonia live!

*1. One week before this issue of the Quarterly went to the printers, fire virtually destroyed the Colonia Schoolhouse.*



# John J. MacGregor—Pioneer Stationer

BY BURTON F. HENDERSON

John James MacGregor was born June 11, 1864 in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia. He came to the United States at an early age doing such work as could be had. He arrived in Ventura County in the mid-1880's. On April 16, 1888 he filed his declaration for citizenship, his witnesses being G. F. Hubbard and J. Y. Rodriguez. He was naturalized November 7, 1891 at Ventura Court House. During his early years he worked for the Sifford Transfer Company (later Ventura Transfer Co.) driving a horse-drawn baggage wagon. He met all trains and hauled travelers' baggage and trunks to their destination. He always wore a special cap for identification purposes.

During the mid-1890's he met and fell in love with Mary Alice Todd, born September 27, 1868. Miss Todd was an accomplished musician, had studied in Europe and had a lively soprano voice. Alice Todd Del Mar was her professional name, and her debut was made in a concert conducted by John Phillip Sousa. A charming woman, she was always in great demand and sang at countless church and community affairs during her life.

Mr. MacGregor and Miss Todd were married July 13, 1897, and Mrs. Ted Hallowell recalls attending a very lovely wedding reception for them at the Fowler house. They lived for less than a year in Santa Barbara where Mr. MacGregor was employed by the Wells Fargo Express Company.

In 1898 they returned to Ventura. Their first home was on Oak Street on the present site of the Great Eastern. Subsequently they purchased and moved to a large house at Palm and Santa Clara streets behind the Ventura Department Store where they lived for many years.

Upon his return from Santa Barbara in 1898, Mr. MacGregor purchased a small newsstand operated by Frank M. Fulstone and located at 353 East Main Street in Ventura. It was called the Ventura News Agency, and not only carried newspapers and periodicals but also delivered all papers in town. This business Mr. MacGregor moved across the street into the Kuhlman Building and combined with it the Wells Fargo Express Agency, the franchise for which he had acquired from C. P. Strickland, who, up to that time had operated both the express and telegraph offices. To the newspapers and magazines were added books, stationery, toys, dishes and many other items.

Among his first employees were a young Spanish boy named Joe Detroy, who drove the Wells Fargo Express Wagon, Mrs. Maud Mellon (daughter of Charley Whitney) and Frank Shaw who delivered the papers. Mr. Shaw recalls that in the mornings he delivered papers on his bicycle in Ventura. In the afternoons he delivered papers up the Avenue as far as the Riva Ranch (just below Arnaz). As an ac-





Ventura Street Fair, October, 1900. The Ventura News Agency is directly back of the conical-shaped tent.

comodation to these ranches, Frank would pick up their mail at the post office and deliver it along with the papers. This was before Rural Free Delivery was introduced. In his spare time Mr. Shaw operated a small printing press at the rear of the store which Mr. MacGregor had acquired from Fulstone. Although he did no job printing, he did print his own bill-heads and other forms.

His brother, Andrew, came to the west coast in March of 1900. One person's recollection is that he came via Australia. He joined John as an employee and in 1909 became a partner. The name of the business was changed to the MacGregor Brothers and so remained until 1931 when Andrew retired because of ill health.

About the time that Andrew joined John, the store moved to the Morrison Building at 472 East Main Street. Here it remained until 1952, and it is this location that most older residents recall. Shortly after Word War I the MacGregor Brothers purchased this building, remodeled its front in the pseudo-Spanish style popular at that time and renamed it the MacGregor Building, the name it still bears.

Besides providing the first "R.F.D." of mail, the MacGregors had many other "firsts." For many years it was the first and only bookstore in the county and the only store with a fairly complete stock of stationery, periodicals and daily newspapers from both San Francisco and



Los Angeles. It was the first store in the county to sell phonographs, holding the franchise for the Edison cylinder-type instrument. It was subsequently the first dealer for Victor phonographs and Victor Red-Seal Records. The MacGregors were the first representatives for the Hoover Vacuum Sweeper and one of the first stores to handle radios. Miss Elizabeth Topping recalls purchasing her first radio, an Atwater-Kent, from John MacGregor in about 1923.

In everyone's recollections of John MacGregor are these personal qualities: his industry (his work day was from 7:00 A.M. 'til 10:00 P.M.), his honesty and integrity, his dependability and conscientiousness. It was upon these qualities that this successful business was founded.

Mr. MacGregor was a member of the San Buenaventura Lodge No. 214, F.&A.M. and was installed Master on February 1, 1921. He took his obligations very seriously, and his friends agree that his Masonic work had a great influence upon his life and was a sustaining force that helped him through the period of his wife's last illness and death in 1923.

His health failing, Mr. MacGregor decided to sell the business in 1938, and on November 1 of that year Mr. A. J. S. Skinner purchased the store and took over its operation. It was he who changed the name to County Stationers. Mr. MacGregor died September 12, 1942.

On February 1, 1939 Mr. Burton F. Henderson joined Mr. Skinner as a partner, and the business was operated as a partnership until August of 1946. At that time it was incorporated.

In 1952 the store was moved for the third time, to its present location, the site for many years of the American Theater. The theater had been torn out and the building remodeled. The move was delayed nearly a month due to damage sustained at the time of the Tehachapi earthquake when the firewall of the two and one-half story I.O.O.F. building to the west became dislodged and crashed through the roof and ceiling of the nearly completed store.

The present store won national recognition in 1953 in a nation wide store design contest. In this competition with several hundred entrants, it was awarded second place.

Current owners are B. F. Henderson, President and N. L. Piper, Vice-President and Secretary.

## Miscellany

From the files of the *Ventura Signal*, 1878

The More murder trial will come up next week, but will probably not be reached until the week following. It is not yet determined whether the parties will be tried separately or together. June 29.

The trustees of Briggs' school district have secured the excellent services of Miss Maria Wason as teacher of that school, which will open as soon as the new schoolhouse is built, the old one having burned down. Miss Wason will have under her charge about 26 pupils. July 20.

Some time since, a meddlesome self-constituted detective here concluded he could make a stake for himself by reporting our home brewer, Mr. Hartman, for violating the revenue laws. With the aid of the equally irresponsible editor of the *Free Press*, he succeeded in causing Mr. Hartman some trouble, temporarily. August 3.

A bull fight is on the tapis for San Miguel's day.

The excitement over the murder trials has abated. August 24.

Parties cutting timber on Government land near Santa Paula should desist or they may get into serious trouble. August 10.

The Pacific Mail Steamship, *City of Peking*, has arrived at San Francisco four days overdue. She brought only 192 Chinese. July 13.

Several citizens living at the foot of Figueroa street complain very bitterly because all the dead dogs, garbage, and filth of the town are hauled to the beach in that vicinity. It is an outrage to pile up all the dead dogs in one spot. They should be evenly distributed. August 31.

Gen. Fremont and family have left New York for Arizona. July 13.

The crowd daily thronging Brown's hotel and restaurant gives evidence that although the county may suffer from the expense attending the More murder trials that Brown will not. July 17.

Some miscreant cut the hose of the fire company on the night of the fire. It is to be hoped the culprit may be hunted and punished. August 31.

Mr. Daniel Baum of the Sespe, has lost four out of his five children by diptheria. He and his wife have the sympathy of the whole community in their very sad bereavement. August 10.

On the 10th of September a picnic of the people of Santa Barbara and Ventura counties will be held at Rincon Creek to celebrate the opening of the new Casitas Pass road. August 31.



## Membership

### LIFE

Mrs. Edith Hoffman  
Mrs. Grace Smith  
Mrs. Robert G. Haley  
Walter Wm. Hoffman

### SUSTAINING

Adolfo Camarillo  
Richard Bard  
Mrs. Walter H. Duval  
A. C. Hardison  
Mr. and Mrs. Milton M. Teague

## Half a Century of Service

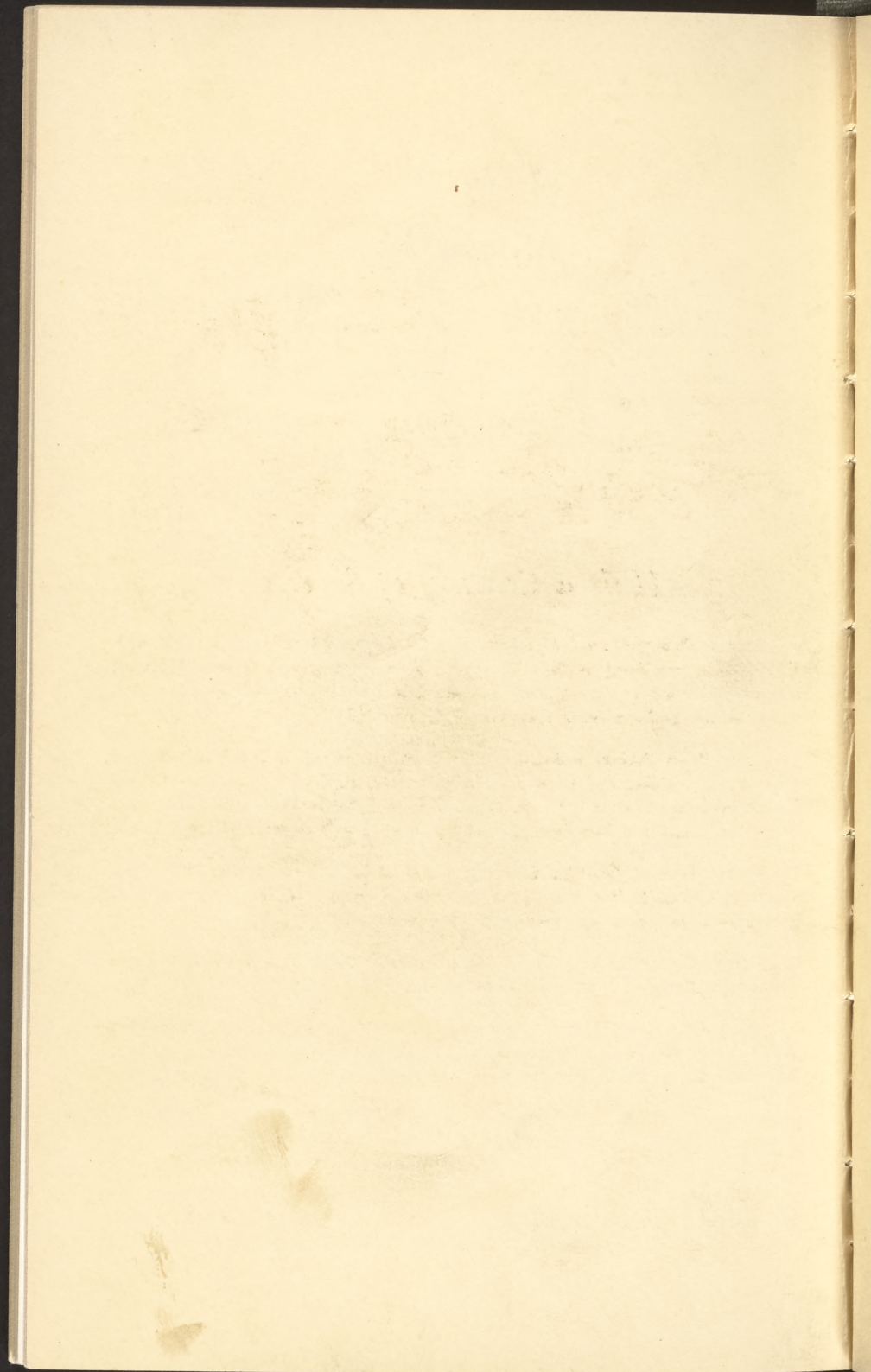
*Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Co.* Organized on April 4, 1898 with E. P. Foster, president; Nathan Blanchard, vice-president and Charles Barnard, secretary. This old Ventura County business firm has faithfully followed the high standards set by its pioneer founders.

*Santa Paula Savings and Loan Association.* Organized in April 1890 as the Santa Paula Building and Loan Association with J. R. Haugh, president; Caspar Taylor, vice-president and H. H. Youngken, secretary. This organization has served the interests of home owners and builders, as well as those of the investor.

*Peoples Lumber Co.* This firm was organized in 1890 by a host of Ventura County pioneers. It has served the construction needs of its founders, their descendants, and countless thousands of newcomers.

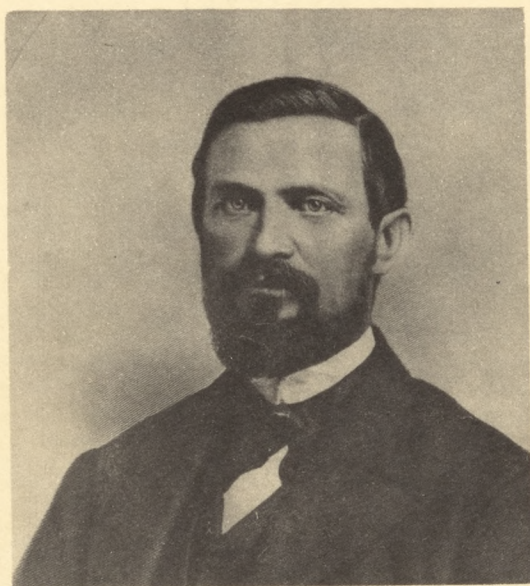
*County Stationers, Inc.,* 532 E. Main, Ventura. Since 1898 Ventura County's complete stationer and office furniture dealer.

*Bank of A. Levy,* 143 W. Fifth St., Oxnard. Founded in 1900 by the late Achille Levy, who came to Hueneme in 1875. Since its inception Bank of A. Levy has been closely allied with the farm and ranch industries of Ventura County.





*The*  
VENTURA COUNTY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
*QUARTERLY*



T. Wallace More

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# *The Ventura County Historical Society*

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The Ventura County Historical Society's headquarters is the Pioneer Museum, 77 North California Street, Ventura, California. There are three classes of membership—active, \$5 per year, sustaining, \$25 per year and life, \$100.

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# The Ventura County Historical Society Quarterly

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AUGUST, 1958

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## Colonies

Americans are a gregarious people. Put two dozen of them within one day's horseback ride of each other and before long they will have organized a Farm Bureau, built an Odd Fellows Hall, and formed a Ladies Aid Society. This propensity for group action has always played a prominent part in the settlement of the western frontier lands, and nowhere was it more evident than in Southern California. During the boom of the eighties, a veritable wave of organized colonization schemes descended on the southland. Few of them were successful, although in many cases the plans were fundamentally sound. Failure usually resulted from the fact that a majority of the shareholders were more interested in the quick profits of speculation rather than the hard work involved in being colonists.

Ventura County was the scene of several such colonies. The ones that come readily to mind are; the Garden of Eden colony in Piru, organized by David C. Cook, Chicago publisher of religious tracts; the Epworth colony near Moorpark, organized by a group of Methodist ministers; and the California Mutual Benefit Colony of Chicago, organized by a group of doctors from the Windy City. There were probably others that progressed as far as the planning stage, but any record of them has long since been forgotten.

It is in the matter of accurate records that we are fortunate insofar as the California Mutual Benefit Colony of Chicago is concerned. Letters, diaries, and the minute book of the secretary of the colony have been utilized by Janet Scott Cameron in preparing her article for this issue. Mrs. Cameron's father was an early settler in the Simi, purchasing land directly from the Simi Land and Water Company. The author came to the district with her parents in 1889 and has lived her entire life there. She is well qualified to permanently place on the records the story of the unsuccessful California Mutual Benefit Colony of Chicago.

# The California Mutual Benefit Colony of Chicago

By JANET SCOTT CAMERON

The Rancho Simi, originally a Spanish grant of some 113,021 acres, was lost by the De la Guerra family during the late sixties and seventies of the last century. It was during this time that a syndicate founded by Thomas Scott of the Pennsylvania Railroad acquired all of the Simi lands except the 1400 acres of the Tapo. This company was interested in oil production only, and when they failed to locate any paying wells decided to liquidate. In 1887 Mr. Thomas R. Bard, resident manager for Thomas Scott, sold 96,000 acres of the rancho to a group of Los Angeles capitalists who became known as the Simi Land and Water Company. This company built a hotel on a knoll north of Los Angeles Avenue in the eastern end of the valley. Charles B. McCoy was made resident manager and Charles Printz secretary in charge of the Los Angeles office. Stagecoach service was inaugurated between San Fernando and the hotel. Then, in modern fashion, the company advertised extensively in the Chicago and Cincinnati papers. The advertisement that attracted the most attention was one showing Mr. Poindexter fishing in the Simi Creek. Frank Cornett says he remembers when the picture was taken with Mr. Poindexter sitting in his buggy and throwing his line into the creek bed that did have a little running stream at that time. However, since the glory of the Gold Rush days was still in the minds of the people and the very name, California, spelled romance to them, the advertising campaign was quite successful.

In 1887 the first Mutual Benefit Company of California was organized in Chicago. This first organization soon died, but a second one followed a few months later consisting of much the same group: Doctors H. H. Sloan, Geo. A. Cutler, John A. Mayer, Messrs. John Rectfertig, Thomas Minchin, Justin Bray, William A. Sampson, and Doctors David C. Stillman and Frederick Schaefer as directors. The idea of the doctors was to establish a model sanitarium and health resort on the banks of the Arroyo Simi, which they imagined to be a river of considerable size. They corresponded with Simi Land and Water Company and made arrangements for a townsite on the banks of the arroyo approximately where the Indian village of Shimiji had stood.

In order to do business, it was necessary for the Chicago company to incorporate and this they did. Following is their statement:





Simi Hotel, 1889

# OFFICE OF THE CALIFORNIA MUTUAL BENEFIT COLONY OF CHICAGO

Chicago, August 23, 1888

At a large and enthusiastic Colony meeting, held at the office of the Treasurer Aug. 20, 1888, the following resolutions were adopted with great unanimity:

In view of the great advisability of early incorporation, taken in connection with the fact that the state law not only makes it necessary that all the stock be actually subscribed but also fixes upon the said original subscribers the responsibility for the whole amount taken (a responsibility which still adheres to them, even when the shares are assigned); therefore be it

RESOLVED, As an inducement to the Colonists and others to take a large number of shares at once and to assume the aforesaid responsibility demanded by the State law, that to everyone who will before September 1st, 1888, take three shares, one extra share will be given—to everyone taking in like manner five shares, two extra shares will be given as aforesaid, and to everyone taking ten shares, five extra.

To give time to hear from members in California and other remote parts, this time is extended in such cases till September 10th, 1888. After this date till October 1, 1888, extra shares may, at the option of the officers or directors, be granted thus to induce larger subscription, one share as above to everyone taking five shares, and three to everyone taking ten.

In view of the changes made since the original purchase and the necessity for prompt action by the directors and officers be it  
RESOLVED: That all members and others who go out with the first colonists in October or November, and until January 1st, 1889, and shall build in the town such buildings as is required by the constitution, shall be entitled to two business lots 25 feet front and two residence lots 50 feet front each, in blocks that shall be selected by the board of directors for that purpose.

Those who wish to avail themselves of these liberal offers should inform the Secretary at once. Also all members and others interested should bear in mind that our option on acreage soon expires and those who wish extra acreage should be on hand with one-fifth the money by the first of September at the latest.

We take pleasure in stating that we have received word from the secretary of the Simi Land and Water Company that water from the mountains can be furnished the colony at a very low rate. We all also are greatly encouraged by the expressed determination of several of our members to build at once and thus give the town a good start, as well as benefit themselves by availing themselves of the offer in the second resolution.

John A. Mayer, Secretary

On November 1, 1888, the following item was recorded in the minutes:

"It was regularly moved and seconded that no more shares be sold for \$40 to any party except they make improvements to the value of five hundred dollars by the first of January, 1889, or become regular settlers, and no stock will be issued until they have complied with the above article."

Dr. Cutler was appointed general manager in California, and his house was shipped with the freight on it paid in full by the colony. He was the valley's first postmaster. Dr. Cutler, his wife, and daughter Nancy lived in the colony for about two years. Then they returned to Chicago.

A group of colonists left Chicago on November 8, 1888. Mr. C. G. Austin kept a diary of the trip. He was more cautious than some and came out to investigate conditions before he pledged himself to anything definite. After an interesting trip from Chicago by rail, the party arrived in San Fernando. The following excerpts from his diary speak for themselves:

"Nov. 15, Thursday. Arrived this morning about 6 A.M. at San Fernando in Los Angeles Co. about 12 miles from Simi Valley. Remained here until 2:20 P.M. at which time the train came in from Los Angeles with Mr. Bray who had gone to Los Angeles to have the trunks, etc. of our party shipped back to San Fernando, they having been shipped through to Los Angeles. A part of our people started in the forenoon for the Simi Valley. We started with a principal part of our people and baggage; the trunks, tents, etc. to come later.





Twelve of these ready-cut houses were shipped by rail from Chicago to Satitoy in 1888. This is one of three that still remains.

I am told San Fernando is a town of about 500 people situated in the San Fernando Valley, about 21 miles from Los Angeles . . .

"This valley until quite recently was owned by a few men in tracts or ranches as they are called here of from 13,000 to 48,000 or 60,000 acres. Some of this land is now being subdivided and sold in small tracts, in town lots, and in 5-10-20 acre tracts . . . I also met a Mr. Wallace who has a beautiful home here. He grows the Washington Navel orange quite extensively and considers it one of the best grown. Informed me that trees three years from the bud will, if well grown, produce  $\frac{3}{4}$  a box of oranges worth \$4.00 to \$4 $\frac{1}{2}$  per box on the tree. I am informed that oranges are generally sold on the tree, the buyer picking them. I am impressed at the rapid growth of vegetation here, a nice thick hedge may be had from the cypress tree 2 and 3 years old.

"In going over to Simi Valley we passed a short distance from the depot, what is called the Mission, a number of adobe buildings, now principally in ruins. Some of the buildings seem to be quite large. An adobe wall surrounding a large space is now in ruins. I saw here some beautiful specimens of palms, also immense cactus, I think of the prickly pear variety. There is also near by a fine orchard of olives.

"Before reaching the mountains that encircle the Simi Valley at its head it commenced raining, and night coming on we found the descent into the valley not the safest although all arrived safely at the Simi Hotel and some of us were too wet for comfort. Our baggage was somewhat wet but I think there was no loss. Our trunks which came later [that is, sent from L.A. to San Fernando], were not brought over the mountain today . . . The Simi Hotel where we are to stop is a fine looking building built upon a hill that seems to have sprung up from the ground near the head of the valley. We found it pleasant. Water is furnished by pipes running up into the mountains, a distance of perhaps  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles and fed there by a mountain stream. We find Mr. McCoy one of the most genial and accommodating landlords. After a warm supper and most pleasant conversation we retired to a restful sleep.

"Nov. 16, Friday. Dawned wet, the first rain of any dimensions for months. It was in fact, the beginning of the rainy season. It had commenced early but it was a very welcome visitor for the barley that was sown and is to be sown needed rain. . . .

"The little valley in which we are located and at the lower or west end of which the C.M.B. Colony of Chicago owns Sections 8 and 9, is about  $8\frac{1}{2}$  miles long and about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide . . . It is, although nearly destitute of improvements, I think the prettiest little valley I ever saw. The surface is for the most part nearly level. At the head is a fine grove covering 2 or more acres of large spreading white oaks with near the mountains a number of live oaks, some of them fine ones . . .

"Through the valley runs a creek called here, Arroyo. At this time its bed for about half way through the valley is dry. Farther on water seeps out of the ground and by the time it reaches the colony ground it contains a nice stream of seemingly good water. Its bed so far as I have observed, is quite hard and covered with pebbles and sand . . .

"Two artesian wells have been sunk in the valley, one said to be 60 feet deep on the south side of Section 9 and the other 90 feet deep near by but not on colony land. The 90 foot well sends up a volume of water about 5 inches in diameter through an iron pipe perhaps 4 feet high; the 60 foot well a volume of water same diameter with less force about 2 feet high.

"The mountains for the most part are picturesque and pleasant to the view. I strolled in company with Messrs. Bray, Heslett, Maltby, Locke, and Martin down the valley and around the Southeast quarter of Section 9. All were pleased and pronounced it good."



On the 17th of the month, rain again kept the colonists indoors, although Mr. Austin records in his diary that all are pleased with their prospects. The diarist did brave the elements long enough to walk up the mountains to where the hotel secured its water and where one of Mr. Hoar's farms was located. Here, like any true eastern tenderfoot, he picked ripe watermelons and tomatoes from the vines and marveled at the variety of flowers and roses in the garden.

"November 18, Sunday. I forgot to mention that Dr. Cutler, the Treasurer of our colony and the one in charge of this end of it came with Mr. Hoffman of our colony together with Mr. Poindexter, who I believe is secretary for the Simi Land and Water and Improvement Co. Our colony land was purchased from the latter.

"November 19, Monday. Fair and warm. Took another stroll, this time with Mr. Hoffman, over our valley and find at two points on Section 8, near the west end, alkali. The patches were small. Saw a very large spider which I thought to be a tarantula, the latter being occasionally found in this region. I mention this fact for the reason that tarantulas are quite poisonous. I forgot to mention I found a horned toad yesterday, a small one which I brought to the hotel."

On the twentieth of November, Mr. Austin went to Los Angeles for a week. He was quite pleased with what he saw there and with the people he met. On November 26 he wrote in his diary:

"A beautiful day. I am feeling quite well. Strolled down the valley again to look at the soil. Called on the people in tents, members of our colony and near the colony land."

The matter of housing for the colonists is of particular interest. Members could have ready-cut houses sent from Chicago by rail if they so desired. At a special meeting held after the August 11th, 1888 meeting this business was transacted:

"At a special meeting it was resolved, viz: In view of the great desirability of the early shipment of houses that we may give our town a good start at the outset and as an inducement to our members to subscribe for them at an early date that the colony pay the freight up to the extent of fifty (\$50) dollars upon the first 15 which may be so ordered, in case they are ordered before Oct. 1, 1888."

On November 1, the minutes of the meeting show that it was moved, seconded, and carried that Dr. Cutler be instructed to buy two tents for the colony. At the November 7th meeting this item occurs:

"It was regularly moved and seconded that the general officers of the Board attend to the freight of the houses with Mr. Harvey as soon as they arrive at Saticoy."

The houses mentioned were the twelve ready-cuts which were shipped to Saticoy from Chicago and hauled to Simi by E. K. Bither and then erected by the colonists. Jem Mori, a Japanese boy who was boarding with Mrs. Charles Warren, a settler who had bought directly from the Simi Land and Water Company, said, "All same children of Israel, twelve houses!" Three of these houses are still standing.



In a second resolution, the directors were given the power of the "mode, manner, and time of making the distribution of lots and acreage." The secretary does not show any of this in the minutes of the meetings, but he does give the complete results of the drawings. In these final drawings, which were held in February and March of 1889, the disposition of lots were made about as follows: 192 town lots were drawn; 30 one acre lots ranging from \$40 to \$48 per acre; 8 two acre lots at from \$35 to \$45 per acre; 3 lots of three acres each at \$40 per acre; 7 lots of four acres each at \$40 per acre; 3 seven acre lots at \$40 per acre; 1 nine acre lot; 8 five acre lots at from \$40 to \$43 per acre; 2 thirteen acre lots at \$40 per acre; 7 fifteen acre lots at from \$40 to \$45 per acre.

These lot drawings proved to be a source of considerable trouble. Most of the purchasers drew several lots, and these were never together. Then, some of the lots were in the creek bottom or on some of the alkali ground just west of the town. As a matter of fact, only a few of those who signed up ever reached the town of Simiopolis, or paid any attention to their transactions. In all probability, many of those who originally purchased shares in the colony did so purely for speculation and had no intention of ever becoming actual colonists in the Simi Valley.

The really serious difficulties that were to result in the eventual abandonment of the California Mutual Benefit Colony project appeared about the time of the land drawings. The minute book of Secretary Mayer shows less and less of the optimism found earlier in Mr. Austin's diary and the colony records. Many of the original organizers of the scheme were now resigning from their offices. At a special meeting held in Simiopolis on March 17, 1889, the resignation of John Rechfering was accepted with thanks for his past services. The regular meeting for April 1, was adjourned for lack of a quorum and held one week later, April 8, 1889. The minutes of this meeting show that the President and Vice-President were absent, and Mr. L. L. Bray acted as Chairman pro tem. The following quotations from the minutes of this meeting carry an undertone of the troubles that were arising:

"It was regularly moved and seconded that the colony donate Block 26 to the School Commissioners of Ventura County of this district for School purposes. Carried.

"The resignation of Thomas Minchin was read and accepted and on motion Mr. W. N. Davis elected to fill the place . . .

"The resignation of Mr. Daniel Stillians was read and accepted and on motion Mr. Henry Mahan elected to his place . . .

"Having no vice president the meeting proceeded the election of such and Mr. L. C. Brower declared as such . . ."

The financial difficulties of the colony continued to increase during the summer. The minutes for the special meeting of August 23, 1889, show that Mr. J. A. Gould was reimbursed (for a claim of \$100 he held against the colony for services rendered) with two shares of stock in the colony plus credit for \$10 to pay his assessment on the



two shares. The regular meeting held the following October was devoted entirely to the Colony's troubles: "After a general discussion about the land, it was moved the President appoint a committee of five to confer with the Simi Land and Water Co. to advise means to relieve our present difficulties."

Beginning with the August 23 meeting, all business of the colony was carried on from the Chicago office. Drastic steps were taken at the first meeting in November to correct the financial problems of the group: "After a general discussion a motion was made and carried, that in order to pay our interest past due; an assessment of \$1.50 on each share be made and at the same time to notify all parties who shipped houses to pay \$35.00 freight advanced by the colony, this amount to be refunded as soon as the promised Rebate money from the R. R. can be collected."

The auditing committee presented the directors with another headache at the November 20th meeting: "The president called on the auditing committee for a report, the books being in the hands of an expert accountant and he not able to give a full account, but stated that the Treasurer was \$160.56 short in his account."

The following excerpts from the minute books tell the story of the decline and fall of the California Mutual Benefit Colony of California:

January 6, 1890. "Hearing the report of the Secretary in regard to the delinquents on assessments it was regularly moved and seconded that the Sec. be instructed to notify all such delinquents by registered letter and if such assessments be not paid in two weeks from Jan. 10th that the shares of such delinquents be forfeited. So ordered."

March 24, 1890. "The report of the California committee was read and action deferred until we can get better terms. . .

"The following resolution was then offered and accepted, viz: Whereas the Board of Directors must of necessity for the present be located here in Chicago and whereas it is very desirable to have as strong a quorum as possible for the purpose of transacting business, therefore be it resolved that the members of the board resident in California be requested to tender their resignations subject to the acceptance by the Board, that their places may be filled here, till such time as it shall seem best to have the majority of the Board in California. Also that a copy of this resolution be sent to each member of the Board in California."

April 7, 1890. "A motion was made to employ an attorney and for his services to give him a paid-up share. Carried."

November 14, 1890. "Mr. J. J. Jones of Los Angeles was present by invitation and gave the Board his views in reference to certain matters of interest to the Board.

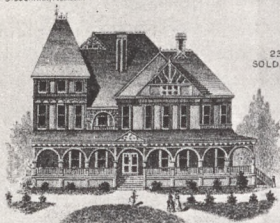
"A motion was made by Dr. Sloan, seconded by Mr. Wright that Mr. Jones be empowered to negotiate with the Simi Land and Water Co. . ."

January 5, 1891. "The motion was made by Dr. H. H. Sloan and seconded by C. L. Brower that the article of the constitution of the



W. G. COCHRAN, President

D. NECHART, Secretary



SIMI HOTEL

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*Los Angeles, Cal. 151 South Broadway. August 26 1891*

Mr. C. G. Austin, Jr.,

Secretary C. M. B. Colony, of Chicago,

Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir:-

Your letter with Resolution of your Board of Directors was received by me on August 14th, 1891, and a special meeting was called by the President on Saturday, August 15th, 1891, to take action on the Resolution, of which the following is a copy.

"The Secretary having presented the copy of Resolution passed by the C. M. B. Colony of Chicago, at a meeting of the Board of Directors on the 6th of August, 1891, offering to quit-claim all interest of the Company in the Simi Lands, after discussion by the Board, it was

Resolved, that this Board desires to express its satisfaction at the amicable spirit shown by the C.M.B. Colony of Chicago and the whole matter be referred to the President and Secretary, in conjunction with the attorneys of the Board, to take such steps to a settlement as they may be advised to be best for the interest of this Corporation. Carried unanimously."

This letter marked the end of the California  
Mutual Benefit Colony of Chicago.

California Mutual Benefit Colony in reference to forfeiture of stock be enforced."

February 23, 1891. "Resolved that Dr. D. C. Stillians be hereby duly authorized to make some definite settlement or arrangement for the C. M. B. Colony with the Simi Land and Water Co. of Los Angeles subject only to letter of instructions given him this day (Feb. 23, 1891), a copy of which is hereby appended."

Following is a copy of the letter of instructions adopted by the board:

"Dr. D. C. Stillian is hereby authorized and instructed in accordance with a resolution of the board of directors of the C. M. B. Colony of Chicago passed this day to make a settlement with the Simi Land and Water Co. of Los Angeles as follows: 1st. If he finds that no terms can be made with them such as we can readily accept and carry out but



that they are determined to foreclose and work a complete forfeiture of our claims, he may state that the colony will quit claim as individuals and as a colony from all future obligations. If he can then get any concessions as to our houses he is expected and authorized to do so. All this he may do without consultation with the board here in Chicago. 2nd. If on the other hand, he thinks best to accept or listen to any newly proposed arrangements whereby we may keep a part of our purchase and continue to exist, he shall before agreeing thereto, submit it to the board here and await their action.

"In any and every case he shall be expected to employ legal advice in settling up or arranging our affairs."

August 3, 1891. "The following resolution was presented by Dr. H. H. Sloan and adopted by a unanimous vote of the board.

"Whereas: it is utterly impossible for the C. M. B. Colony of Chicago to go on with the contracts entered into with the Simi Land and Water Co. in reference to lands in the Simi Valley for reasons which have been repeatedly stated by us to them.

"Therefore be it resolved that we offer to the Simi Land and Water Co. all our rights entered into as a colony by virtue of our contracts with them and to help them in any way to clear up the title and regain possession of the land in case they will release us therefore fully from the contracts. This we will do and trust to their generosity and sense of justice to deal fairly with individual settlers and with the owners of the houses. . ."

The above resolution was duly received by the Simi Land and Water Company, and a special meeting was called of that company's directors. As a result, the following letter was sent to the California Mutual Benefit Colony of Chicago:

"Your letter with the resolution of your Board of Directors was received by me on August 14, 1891, and a special meeting was called by the President on Saturday, August 15, 1891 to take action on the resolution, of which the following is a copy.

"The Secretary having presented the copy of the Resolution passed by the C. M. B. Colony of Chicago, at a meeting of the Board of Directors on the 6th of August, 1891, offering to quit-claim all interest of the Company in the Simi lands, after discussion by the Board, it was

"Resolved, that this Board desires to express its satisfaction at the amicable spirit shown by the C. M. B. Colony of Chicago and the whole matter referred to the President and Secretary, in conjunction with the attorney of the Board, to take such steps to a settlement as they may be advised to be best for the interest of this corporation. Carried unanimously."

So it came about that an amicable settlement was made. The Simi Land and Water Company dealt fairly with the colonists, giving them credit for what they had paid and allowing them to keep their houses. Of course, only a few families had come, and only twelve houses had been shipped to Satcoy. Members who remained for a number of years were: Mrs. Avis Bott, her two sons and two daughters; Mr. and Mrs.



A. H. Davis; D. B. Davis; Mr. and Mrs. Kyle; the Paranteaux; Mrs. Moore and her three daughters; John Sawtelle; Mr. Lewis and Mrs. Brickett; Mr. C. G. Austin Jr. who sent for his family several years later. Descendants of these people still live in the county.

When the colonists first came the prospects seemed very dreary. The valley, except in the east where it was covered with native oak, and along the northern foothills where it was covered with a dense growth of prickly pear cactus, was one immense barley field. The only buildings visible were the old adobe on what is now the Strathearn place and the old ranch buildings for the whole area on what is now the corner of Royal Avenue and Erringer Road.

The colonists lived in tents while the ready-cut houses were being built. There were no regular carpenters in the group, so the work proceeded slowly. In fact, the east winds came before they were prepared for them and caused quite a commotion.

However, they were warmly welcomed by the ranchers who lived in the valley. They were the people on the old de la Guerra place on the Tapo, now controlled by the Lyon and Campbell partners and Bursch and Berry. Mr. M. Stones managed the old vineyards and orchards and was always glad to show visitors around. Then, there were the men who rented large areas from the Scott Syndicate through Mr. Thomas R. Bard. These were C. E. Hoar, S. M. W. Easley, Bud Taylor, the Philbrooks, the Cornetts, Henry Mahan and the Herreges. Mr. Hoar called regularly on all of the colonists, bringing them fruits and flowers and inviting them to visit him at his "Humming Bird's Nest." Finally there were the newcomers, people brought in by the Simi Land and Water Company and farmers who had purchased land from them. The colonists often said that it was this friendliness which encouraged them to stay.

Most of our early settlers had a much better than average education, and soon had a good community life established. Mr. Howland had studied medicine. He was also a student of religion and invited his neighbors in for prayer and discussion on Sunday mornings. After a time a colony house which had never been completed was offered the people for their public gatherings. A student minister, J. C. Elliot, used to come from McClay Theological School in San Fernando to preach on Sunday mornings. Due to bad roads and east winds he was very irregular in attendance, but there were always men able to take his place. During the week school, with a Mr. Pendleton as teacher, was held in this building and on Saturday nights the desks were pushed back, the pulpit stood in the corner while the people danced to the old tunes Mr. Stones played on his fiddle. In the summer while the Paranteaux sisters were visiting their mother, informal musicals and literary programs were added to the calendar of events as well as chicken pie suppers and picnics.

As there was no store this side of San Fernando or Hueneme, in the fall when the farmers hauled their grain to Hueneme they would pay up their debts and bring back their next winter's supply of



groceries. Meat could be had only when someone killed an animal or shot doves, quail, rabbits or deer. Frank Cornett said that after the colonists came he used to ride the mile and a half to the colony with a big pail of fresh milk in front of him and ladle it out for 25c a quart. He enjoyed a good business until his customers ran out of cash, which was very soon for there was little chance to make money, especially in the winter. Then, late in 1888 or early 1889, John Sawtelle built a little store on Los Angeles Avenue and stocked it with goods he had brought with him from Nebraska. He did not have much, but it was quite an improvement.

At first the company stage carried the mail from San Fernando to the Simi Hotel. Pete Lopez, Sam Rodriguez, and Joe Horner were company drivers. In 1889 Dr. Cutler was appointed the first postmaster of Simiopolis while Fred Bagnall was appointed carrier to bring the mail from the hotel to the colony office, which was located in Dr. Cutler's house on the corner of First and Pacific streets. The building is still standing. On the discontinuance of the stage, John Sawtelle took the contract to bring the mail from San Fernando. This he did when the weather was favorable, bringing besides the mail, small articles ordered by his customers. On one occasion a spool of white thread was wanted. Mr. Sawtelle did not have it, but on his next trip he brought it from San Fernando, charging five cents for the thread and ten cents for his trouble.

The Simi School was built in 1890 on the site selected by the California Mutual Benefit Colony of Chicago. Miss Janet Northcott was the first teacher in the new building.

The colony was a failure but in 1890 a goodly number of farmers came in, buying directly from the Simi Land and Water Company. The address, Simiopolis, % San Fernando, was dropped and Simi, accent on the last syllable, the original name applied to the section, retained.

#### NOTE

The Austin papers, source of most of the material in this article, were the property of Mr. C. G. Austin's daughter. Mrs. Cameron states, "Mrs. Helen Austin Shirley treasured her father's diary, the journal, some letters and maps and other papers. When she died her husband and sister gave me permission to use this material for such purposes as this."

# San Buenaventura's Chinese Fire Company

By J. H. MORRISON

In all early California communities fire was an ever present hazard due, largely, to the prevailing flimsy wooden construction which was easy to erect, but was even more easily destroyed. Thus it was that with the building of a town, the formation of a fire department was usually the first order of business. These organizations were more or less private clubs whose membership was carefully screened, and in the cities and large communities there was fierce rivalry among the several companies. This rivalry was not confined to equipment and fire-fighting ability but was largely concerned with rainbow-hued uniforms, the gaudier the better.

The town of San Buenaventura was incorporated in 1866, but as practically every building in town was of adobe construction, there was little or no need of fire protection. The fact is that there was no water supply other than the Ventura River. The Mission aqueduct, which brought water from Casitas (some seven miles north of town), was rendered useless during the floods of 1861-62. Until late in 1873, water for domestic use was hauled in barrels from the river, delivered at the door for fifty or seventy-five cents a barrel. Saturday night could have held few terrors for the small fry of early San Buenaventura.

In 1873, the Santa Ana Water Company completed a ditch from Casitas to a reservoir situated above Poli Street and laid pipes through the town. As the town grew the fire hazard increased because of the prevalent board and batten buildings constructed both for business and residential uses. Fortunately, there were only infrequent fires which affected isolated buildings without endangering the built-up section of the town, but the need for protection became more and more apparent.

On June 8, 1875, fifty-five leading citizens met—presumably at Spears Hall—to organize "The Monumental Hose, Hook, Fire and Ladder Company," with R. G. Surdam as temporary chairman and L. F. Eastin as secretary. Election of officers returned as President, B. T. Williams; Secretary, L. F. Eastin; Treasurer, Luis F. Arnaz; Foreman, R. G. Surdam; First Asst. Foreman, Owen Rodgers; Second Asst. Foreman, A. J. Snodgrass. A committee of three was appointed "upon hose, uniforms, etc." and a second committee was formed to confer with the Town Trustees "in regard to putting in Hydrants, Fire Plugs, etc." So San Buenaventura had a Fire Company but no hose, no hydrants or fire plugs, and worst of all, no uniforms! However, on June 15, a warrant was drawn for \$349.25 as payment for uniforms received from San Francisco, so one might suspect that





San Buenaventura's Chinese Fire Company. The "Oriental Monumentals" are parading on the Fourth of July, 1876.

these uniforms had been ordered but failed to arrive in time for the initial meeting. Each of these men paid an entry fee of twenty dollars, and each bought his own uniform; all this being done as a public service. By 1876 the hose had been delivered, and by 1877 two fire hydrants had been installed. In March, 1877, Goodhall, Nelson & Co. (Operators of coastal steamers) donated a 200 pound bell. In order to make use of the bell, a small plot was rented from the Catholic Church authorities for \$3.00 a month, and \$300 was expended for a fire house.

The first fire occurred on July 12, 1877, and we quote verbatim from the Minutes of the August 6 meeting: "Foreman reports to President that at 5 o'clock on the morning of July 12, a fire was discovered on East Main Street in Block 59 and for their egillity in arresting and confining The Fire Fiend to but one building the members are receiving general commendation of the citizens of San Buenaventura this being the first fire in the Town since the organization of this company." From the files of the Ventura *Signal*, we find the building, a saloon, stood on the north side of Main Street in the 300 block.

Not to be outdone, the two hundred odd residents of the local China town (Figueroa Street, between Main and Santa Clara streets) organized a hose company of their own, built or bought a two wheel hosecart, 100 feet of hose, and were in business. They did not go in for fancy uniforms. A photograph taken of a July 4th, 1876, parade shows the twelve Chinese smoke eaters attired in umbrella shaped



straw hats, blue trousers and smocks—pretty much their everyday dress. As a boy I saw these men in various parades, and it was generally felt about town that when there was a fire the Chinese were always the first to arrive at the scene! So far as we can tell, there was no reference to this group in any of the local papers, dating from 1876 to 1905, inclusive. The California State Library informs us that: "from the dearth of references, it would seem that this Chinese Fire Company in San Buenaventura may have been unique, or at least rather unusual."

However, we know there was a Chinese fire company at Oxnard perhaps as early as 1898, and it is my own "one man's opinion" that there were numerous similar organizations throughout early California, organized to protect their own properties which, in many cases, were isolated from the town proper.

The fact that there are practically no records of Chinese fire companies is possibly because local newspapers made little or no mention of Chinese activities deserving a measure of praise, for poor John Chinaman was in bad odor with the white population, except when he was celebrating his New Year. Then we accepted gifts of firecrackers, litchi nuts, candied coconuts, ginger root, an occasional bottle of liquid fire gin, and for the lady of the house a silk shawl or carved ivory fan.

In the late 1840s and early 1850s, Chinese immigration was encouraged as these men furnished a labor force for farms, mines and practically any type of work requiring hard manual labor. The building of the Central Pacific Railroad brought thousands of Chinese to California, and if you have traveled across the Sierra Nevada by train, you have ridden over the roadbed carved out of the mountains by these Chinese. With completion of the road these men scattered the length and breadth of California, and by this time a definite feeling of antagonism toward the Chinese had developed, a feeling which resulted in passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act.

John Chinaman was a decided individualist whose association with Americans was on a strictly business basis. He established himself in one section of a town and there set up his shop, laundry or employment office, and built the maze of alleys, corridors and cellars found in every Chinatown. Knowing that he was apart from the community and could expect little if any help in time of trouble, isn't it reasonable to assume that he made provisions for fire protection in his own highly inflammable district? While he deserves credit for his civic interest, it might just be that John practiced public relations in seeing to it that his fire brigade was on the job at any and all fires. He very often got there first, too. Maybe not "fustest with the mostest" but he was there with all available equipment. Who could do more?



# The Los Angeles to San Luis Obispo Road, 1860

By R. G. PERCY

An historical article often stirs up additional interest and research. My previous article, "The First Rincon Highway" did just that—a letter from Wally Smith of Santa Paula brought out information that led to further research relating to an earlier day. In his files was an item from the Los Angeles *Star* for May 1859 stating that at the request of the Santa Barbara County Supervisors, Los Angeles County had allocated \$2000 towards building a road between the two towns. Also, that Santa Barbara County had voted \$15,000 in bonds to match a like sum appropriated by the State legislature to build a road from the Los Angeles County line to the San Luis Obispo County line, a distance of about 140 miles.

The contract to build the road was awarded to T. Wallace More with George Black as supervising engineer. It was to be 20 feet wide except in the mountainous spots and at least 16 feet above the high water mark in all places. On the Rincon, all loose rocks were to be carted above the high tide line.

This data led to further research, with our efficient secretary, Jack Morrison, coming up with information from the Thompson and West *History of Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties*, and the *Santa Barbara Gazette* of 1856.

From the *Gazette* of that year, "The only available road up to this time between Santa Barbara and Ventura is along the beach, around Rincon Point and Punta Gorda. The character of the road is so changeable because of falling masses of earth from the cliffs, which in some places are 400 feet high, and the sand, rocks and gravel washed up by the waves, that the road is worthless for the transportation of goods. Many propositions have been made for improvement. Wm. Johnson, employed by the County to survey the road, recommends a causeway to be erected above high tide to be protected with plank fencing, or the building of a stone causeway six feet above high tide, with openings for the passage of water, and with turnouts at places. The plans are estimated to cost \$35,000 and \$50,000 each. It is urged that with such a road the trade from the southern mines can be secured for Santa Barbara rather than Los Angeles."

This is evidence that causeways were considered for the Rincon as early as 1856, although nothing was done about the matter. Undoubtedly, the supervisors were scared out by the suggested costs. This section was still undeveloped, given over to large land grants and used only for the pasturing of herds of half-wild Spanish cattle.

The building of a road through Santa Barbara County was again brought up by the supervisors in 1859. The following information is taken from the Thompson and West history:



"An act was passed [by the State Legislature] to authorize the Supervisors to call an election to see whether the voters would incur a debt of \$15,000 for the construction of a road through the county, which election was appointed for May 21, 1859. In the same act the Legislature appropriated \$15,000 towards the same project, to be paid over and expended under the direction of the authorities of Santa Barbara County, when they should expend a like sum for that purpose.

"Little interest seemed to be manifested in the matter, for the whole number of votes cast was 105, of which 86 were for the road and 19 against. The road was to intersect or run by the Salinas or salt pond, east of town, Montecito, Carpenteria, Rincon, Punta Gorda, Canada Sauses, Pitos, San Buenaventura, Puerta la Somas, Las Posas, Canada la Quimada, and Santa Susana to the county line [Los Angeles]. The north route to go to the San Luis Obispo County line. The supervisors called for bids at cash rates, the bonds not to be sold less than eighty percent.

"Chas. Fernald, Jose de Arnaz and Pablo de la Guerra were appointed Road Commissioners to view the line, and E. Nidever, County Surveyor, was requested to accompany them to make estimates. W. H. Leighton was directed to make a reconnaissance for a road to the Santa Susana Ranch. His plan was accepted and he was paid for the report \$142.50.

"T. Wallace More made a proposition to construct the road through the county for the sum of \$15,000 in bonds . . .

"The building of the road was awarded to T. Wallace More, and the Commissioners ordered to draft a contract in accordance with the terms of the offer. More gave a mortgage on valuable property for \$20,000 for a faithful performance of the contract, though he afterward asked the mortgage be canceled and that a bond for \$5000 be substituted therefor, with N. A. Den and himself as sureties."

At this point in the story, an item from the Los Angeles *Star* of July 28, 1860, should be noted. The account as published in the *Star* does nothing to clarify an already confused situation:

"We understand that Mr. James Thompson, of this city, has contracted for making the new road through the County of Santa Barbara. The road runs through the whole length of the county, from the Los Angeles to the San Luis Obispo lines, passing through San Buenaventura, city of Santa Barbara, and out by the Gaviota Pass, a distance in all, of 125 miles. The road will be completed in four or five months; \$30,000 has been appropriated therefor, in State and county bonds. The fact that the work is to be executed under the superintendence of Mr. Thompson, is a sufficient guarantee that it will be well and substantially performed."

The *Star* also calls the attention of the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors to the above item and suggest it would be well to attend to the repairing of the Los Angeles portion of the Santa Barbara road.

Continuing with the Thompson and West version:



"October 8, 1860, At a special meeting to consider the wagon road, T. W. More presented a petition that the \$15,000 given by the State be turned over to him. The petition was referred to the Commissioners who recommended that the contractor, T. W. More, receive at present but \$10,000; that \$5000 be placed in the County Treasurer, subject to future order; also requiring him to give bonds for the completion of the road, with Henry and Alexander More as sureties; also appointing N. A. Den and Thomas Davies as Commissioners respecting the change of location at Arroyo Hondo.

"Dec. 4: T. W. More asked for more time to complete the road as it was not possible to get suitable laborers for the work. The Commission recommended an extension of time.

"Geo. Black, engineer of the road, presented a bill for \$866.50 for services; \$450 was allowed and it was ordered that T. W. More pay the same. A resolution was spread on the records protesting against the general management of the construction, and upon learning that More had considerable unexpended money on his hands, resolved that *he should not receive another cent until he gave bond for performance.*

"March 5, 1861: T. W. More announced that he was unable to complete the road, whereupon the Supervisors ordered the Commissioners to take possession of the work, and complete the road at the expense of the contractor. T. W. More offered to deliver to the Commissioners all the teams, tools, lumber, etc. connected with the work.

"Suit was ordered to commence against More and his sureties for the performance of the contract, Jose de Arnaz being ordered to conduct the same. It would seem at this point that James Thompson had been employed to build the road, as the President of the Commission was directed not to pay any more money to the contractor without a specification of the work done.

"August 8: Ordered that the Road Commissioners be relieved from further duties with the thanks of the Board of Supervisors.

"May 5, 1862: Charles Fernald presented a proposition from C. Hubert of San Francisco to prosecute the suit against T. W. More to a successful termination for \$300 down and \$300 at the conclusion of the trial in District Court, with the contingent of \$200 more if it was appealed.

"September 8, 1862—Conclusion of the Road Business: Ordered the claim in damages against T. W. More for not having completed the road from the County of Los Angeles to San Luis Obispo, as per contract with the Board of Supervisors of Santa Barbara County, June 21, 1860, having been settled between the two parties by said More giving two notes payable to the County of Santa Barbara, or order; one for \$300 payable on the 15th day (no month mentioned) 1862, and the other for \$650, payable the first day of May, 1863. It is hereby ordered that upon payment of said notes, said More shall be relieved from all claims against him for damage or otherwise under said

contract, and that all bonds and other securities whatsoever shall be held cancelled, and considered null and void, and shall be returned to him. Settlement on the above basis is agreed upon by all parties; the Supervisors, District Attorney and N. Hubert, special attorney, signing the statement."

And so ended the first attempt to build a road through what was then Santa Barbara County. The disastrous result seems to have been caused first by a want of technical knowledge of the cost of construction, and second, by an almost unpardonable laxity in the business transactions by which large sums of money were paid out upon inadequate vouchers of proper expenditures. There is no record of how much road was actually built, and it is debatable if there was a road constructed along the Rincon above high tide line until 1912, when the wooden causeways were built. A search through the files of the Los Angeles *Star* in an attempt to establish just how much road was finished, turned up only the following item in the issue of August 3, 1861: "This road as far as our county is concerned, is now completed, but we are astonished to find that the Santa Barbara portion thereof is still in an unfinished condition. This is the more singular from the fact that the people of that county have been engaged in the improvement for years and obtained a large appropriation from the State, whilst our portion has been undertaken by the county alone. The work was given to Mr. James Thompson, who has filled his contract in the most creditable manner. The stages of the Mail Company will be moved on to this road as soon as the upper portion is completed, thereby saving fifteen miles in the distance to Santa Barbara. We hope our Santa Barbara friends will hurry on the work."

Why the editor of the *Star* insisted on having Thompson as the contractor on the job, we do not know. From a perusal of the *Star* files, it appears evident that there was no correspondent covering the Santa Barbara area for the paper. Only widely scattered short news items from the region appear during the years of 1860 and 1861. The number of houses in San Buenaventura is given as 77 for this period, while another issue mentions that clams from San Buenaventura are selling for \$1 per bucket on the streets of Los Angeles (the size of the bucket or the clams not specified).

Ventura County did have a right-of-way above the high tide mark, for in the 1880's records show that such a right-of-way was deeded to the Southern Pacific. Whatever road More may have completed along the Rincon was undoubtedly destroyed by the winter storms in 1861-1862. It was the wettest winter ever known in this section, and slides and wash-outs would have obliterated any road in places such as Sea Cliff.



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Mrs. Grace Smith  
Mrs. Robert G. Haley  
Walter Wm. Hoffman

### SUSTAINING

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*Ventura County Mutual Fire Insurance Co.* Organized on April 4, 1898 with E. P. Foster, president; Nathan Blanchard, vice-president and Charles Barnard, secretary. This old Ventura County business firm has faithfully followed the high standards set by its pioneer founders.

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